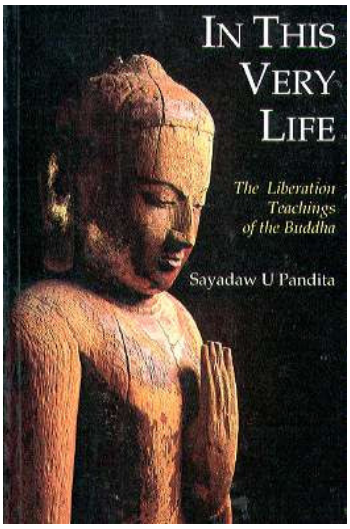
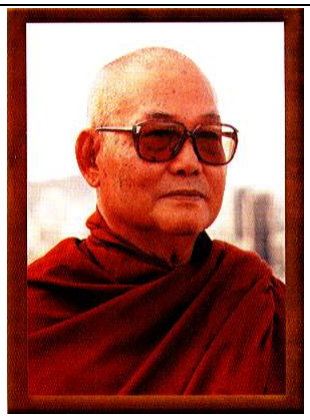
"Homage to Him, the Exalted, the Worthy, the Fully Enlightened One."

"In This Very Life"

-*The liberation teachings of the Buddha!*



Enjoy the Bliss of Vipassana Meditation!!!



By Ven Sayadaw U Pandita

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1.Basic Morality and Meditation Instructions

We do not practice meditation to gain admiration from anyone. Rather, we practice to contribute to peace in the world. We try to follow the teachings of the Buddha, and take the instructions of trustworthy teachers, in hopes that we too can reach the Buddha's state of purity. Having realized this purity within ourselves, we can inspire others and share this Dhamma, this truth.

The Buddha's teachings can be summed up in three parts: *sila*, morality; *samadhi,* concentration; and *panna* intuitive wisdom.

Sila is spoken of first because it is the foundation for the other two. Its importance cannot be overstressed. Without sila, no further practices can be undertaken. For lay people the basic level of sila consists of five precepts or training rules: refraining from taking life, refraining from taking what is not given, refraining from sexual misconduct, refraining from lying, and refraining from taking intoxicating substances. These observances foster a basic purity that makes it easy to progress along the path of practice.

A BASIC SENSE OF HUMANITY

Sila is not a set of commandments handed down by the Buddha, and it need not be confined to Buddhist teachings. It actually derives from a basic sense of humanity. For example, suppose we have a spurt of anger and want to harm another being. If we put ourselves in that other being's shoes, and honestly contemplate the action we have been planning, we will quickly answer, "No, I wouldn't want that done to me. That would be cruel and unjust." If we feel this way about some action that we plan, we can be quite sure that the action is unwholesome.

In this way, morality can be looked upon as a manifestation of our sense of oneness with other beings. We know what it feels like to be harmed, and out of loving care and consideration we undertake to avoid harming others. We should remain committed to truthful speech and avoid words that abuse, deceive or slander. As we practice refraining from angry actions and angry speech, then this gross and unwholesome mental state may gradually cease to arise, or at least

it will become weaker and less frequent.

Of course, anger is not the only reason we harm other beings. Greed might make us try to grab something in an illegal or unethical way. Or our sexual desire can attach itself to another person's partner. Here again, if we consider how much we could hurt someone, we will try hard to refrain from succumbing to lustful desire.

Even in small amounts, intoxicating substances can make us less sensitive, more easily swayed by gross motivations of anger and greed. Some people defend the use of drugs or alcohol, saying that these substances are not so bad. On the contrary, they are very dangerous; they can lead even a good-hearted person into forgetfulness. Like accomplices to a crime, intoxicants open the door to a host of problems, from just talking nonsense, to inexplicable bursts of rage, to negligence that could be fatal to oneself or others. Indeed, any intoxicated person is unpredictable. Abstaining from intoxicants is therefore a way of protecting all the other precepts.

For those whose devotion makes them wish to undertake a further discipline, there are also sets of eight and ten precepts for lay people, ten precepts for nuns, and the Vinaya or 227 rides for monks. There is more information about these forms of sila in the Glossary.

Refinements During a Retreat

During a meditation retreat it becomes useful to change some of our conduct in ways that support the intensification of meditation practice. In a retreat, silence becomes the appropriate form of right speech, and celibacy that of sexual conduct. One eats lightly to prevent drowsiness and to weaken sensual appetite. The Buddha recommended fasting from noon until the following morning; or, if this is difficult, one could eat only a little in the afternoon. During the time one thus gains to practice, one may well discover that the taste of the Dhamma excels all worldly tastes!

Cleanliness is another support for developing insight and wisdom. You should bathe, keep nails and hair trimmed, and take care to regulate the bowels. This is known as internal cleanliness. Externally, your clothing and bedroom should be tidy and neat. Such observance is said to bring clarity and lightness of mind. Obviously, you do not make cleanliness an obsession. In the context of a retreat, adornments, cosmetics, fragrances, and time-consuming practices to beautify and perfect the body are not appropriate.

In fact, in this world there is no greater adornment than purify of conduct, no greater refuge, and no other basis for the flowering of insight and wisdom. Sila brings a beauty that is not plastered onto the outside, but instead comes from the heart and is reflected in the entire person. Suitable for everyone, regardless of

age, station or circumstance, truly it is the adornment for all seasons. So please be sure to keep your virtue fresh and alive.

Even if we refine our speech and actions to a large extent, however, sila is not sufficient in itself to tame the mind. A method is needed to bring us to spiritual maturity, to help us realize the real nature of life and to bring the mind to a higher level of understanding. That method is meditation.

MEDITATION INSTRUCTIONS

The Buddha suggested that either a forest place under a tree or any other very quiet place is best for meditation. He said the meditator should sit quietly and peacefully with legs crossed. If sitting with crossed legs proves to be too difficult other sitting postures may be used. For those with back trouble a chair is quite acceptable. It is true that to achieve peace of mind, we must make sure our body is at peace. So it is important to choose a position that will be comfortable for a long period of time.

Sit with your back erect, at a right angle to the ground, but not too stiff. The reason for sitting straight is not difficult to see. An arched or crooked back will soon bring pain. Furthermore, the physical effort to remain upright without additional support energizes the meditation practice.

Close your eyes. Now place your attention at the belly, at the abdomen. Breathe normally, not forcing your breathing, neither slowing it down nor hastening it, just a natural breath. You will become aware of certain sensations as you breathe in and the abdomen rises, as you breathe out and the abdomen falls. Now sharpen your aim and make sure that the mind is attentive to the entirety of each process. Be aware from the very beginning of all sensations involved in the rising. Maintain a steady attention through the middle and the end of the rising. Then be aware of the sensations of the falling movement of the abdomen from the beginning, through the middle, and to the very end of the falling.

Although we describe the rising and falling as having a beginning, a middle, and an end, this is only in order to show that your awareness should be continuous and thorough. We do not intend you to break these processes into three segments. You should try to be aware of each of these movements from beginning to end as one complete process, as a whole. Do not peer at the sensations with an over-focused mind, specifically looking to discover how the abdominal movement begins or ends.

In this meditation it is very important to have both effort and precise aim, so

that the mind meets the sensation directly and powerfully. One helpful aid to precision and accuracy is to make a soft mental note of the object of awareness, naming the sensation by saying the word gently and silently in the mind, like "rising, rising...falling, falling."

Returning from Wandering

There will be moments when the mind wanders off. You will start to think of something. At this time, watch the mind! Be aware that you are thinking. To clarify this to yourself, note the thought silently with the verbal label "thinking, thinking," and come back to the rising and falling.

The same practice should be used for objects of awareness that arise at any of what are called the six sense doors: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Despite making an effort to do so, no one can remain perfectly focused on the rising and falling of the abdomen forever. Other objects inevitably arise and become predominant. Thus, the sphere of meditation encompasses all of our experiences: sights, sounds, smells, tastes, sensations in the body, and mental objects such as visions in the imagination or emotions. When any of these objects arise you should focus direct awareness on them, and use a gentle verbal label "spoken" in the mind.

During a sitting meditation, if another object impinges strongly on the awareness so as to draw it away from the rising and falling of the abdomen, this object must be clearly noted. For example, if a loud sound arises during your meditation, consciously direct your attention toward that sound as soon as it arises. Be aware of the sound as a direct experience, and also identify it succinctly with the soft, internal verbal label "hearing, hearing." When the sound fades and is no longer predominant, come back to the rising and falling. This is the basic principle to follow in sitting meditation.

In making the verbal label, there is no need for complex language. One simple word is best. For the eye, ear, and tongue doors we simply say, "Seeing, seeing... Hearing, hearing... Tasting, tasting." For sensations in the body we may choose a slightly more descriptive term like warmth, pressure, hardness, or motion. Mental objects appear to present a bewildering diversity, but actually they fall into just a few clear categories such as thinking, imagining, remembering, planning, and visualizing. But remember that in using the labeling technique, your goal is not to gain verbal skills. Labeling technique helps us to perceive clearly the actual qualities of our experience, without getting immersed in the content. It develops mental power and focus. In meditation we seek a deep, clear, precise awareness of the mind and body. This direct awareness shows us the truth about our lives, the actual nature of mental and physical processes.

Meditation need not come to an end after an hour of sitting. It can be carried

out continuously through the day. When you get up from sitting, you must note carefully — beginning with the intention to open the eyes. "Intending, intending... Opening, opening." Experience the mental event of intending, and feel the sensations of opening the eyes. Continue to note carefully and precisely, with full observing power, through the whole transition of postures until the moment you have stood up, and when you begin to walk. Throughout the day you should also be aware of, and mentally note, all other activities, such as stretching, bending your arm, taking a spoon, puffing on clothes, brushing your teeth, closing the door, opening the door, closing your eyelids, eating, and so forth. All of these activities should be noted with careful awareness and a soft mental label.

Apart from the hours of sound sleep, you should try to maintain continuous mindfulness throughout your waking hours. Actually this is not a heavy task; it is just sitting and walking and simply observing whatever occurs.

WALKING MEDITATION

During a retreat it is usual to alternate periods of sitting meditation with periods of formal walking meditation of about the same duration, one after another throughout the day. One hour is a standard period, but forty-five minutes can also be used. For formal walking, retreatants choose a lane of about twenty steps in length and walk slowly back and forth along it.

In daily life, walking meditation can also be very helpful. A short period - say ten minutes - of formal walking meditation before sitting serves to focus the mind. Beyond this advantage, the awareness developed in walking meditation is useful to all of us as we move our bodies from place to place in the course of a normal day.

Walking meditation develops balance and accuracy of awareness as well as durability of concentration. One can observe very profound aspects of the Dhamma while walking, and even get enlightened! In fact a yogi who does not do walking meditation before sitting is like a car with a rundown battery. He or she will have a difficult time starting the engine of mindfulness when sitting.

Walking meditation consists of paying attention to the walking process. If you are moving fairly rapidly, make a mental note of the movement of the legs, "Left, right, left right" and use your awareness to follow the actual sensations throughout the leg area. If you are moving more slowly, note the lifting, moving and placing of each foot. In each case you must try to keep your mind on just the sensations of walking. Notice what processes occur when you stop at the end of the lane, when you stand still, when you turn and begin walking again. Do not

watch your feet unless this becomes necessary due to some obstacle on the ground; it is unhelpful to hold the image of a foot in your mind while you are trying to be aware of sensations. You want to focus on the sensations themselves, and these are not visual. For many people it is a fascinating discovery when they are able to have a pure, bare perception of physical objects such as lightness, tingling, cold, and warmth.

Usually we divide walking into three distinct movements: lifting, moving and placing the foot. To support a precise awareness, we separate the movements clearly, making a soft mental label at the beginning of each movement, and making sure that our awareness follows it clearly and powerfully until it ends. One minor but important point is to begin noting the placing movement at the instant that the foot begins to move downward.

A New World in Sensations

Let us consider lifting. We know its conventional name, but in meditation it is important to penetrate behind that conventional concept and to understand the true nature of the whole process of lifting, beginning with the intention to lift and continuing through the actual process, which involves many sensations.

Our effort to be aware of lifting the foot must neither overshoot the sensation nor weakly fall short of this target. Precise and accurate mental aim helps balance our effort. When our effort is balanced and our aim is precise, mindfulness will firmly establish itself on the object of awareness. It is only in the presence of these three factors - effort, accuracy and mindfulness - that concentration develops. Concentration, of course, is collectedness of mind, one-pointedness. Its characteristic is to keep consciousness from becoming diffuse or dispersed.

As we get closer and closer to this lifting process, we will see that it is like a line of ants crawling across the road. From afar the line may appear to be static, but from closer up it begins to shimmer and vibrate. And from even closer the line breaks up into individual ants, and we see that our notion of a line was just an illusion. We now accurately perceive the line of ants as one ant after another ant, after another ant. Exactly like this, when we look accurately at the lifting process from beginning to end, the mental factor or quality of consciousness called "insight" comes nearer to the object of observation. The nearer insight comes, the clearer the true nature of the lifting process can be seen. It is an amazing fact about the human mind that when insight arises and deepens through *vipassana* or insight, meditation practice, particular aspects of the truth about existence tend to be revealed in a definite order. This order is known as the progress of insight.

The first insight which meditators commonly experience is to begin to comprehend - not intellectually or by reasoning, but quite intuitively - that the

lifting process is composed of distinct mental and material phenomena occurring together, as a pair. The physical sensations, which are material, are linked with, but different from, the awareness, which is mental. We begin to see a whole succession of mental events and physical sensations, and to appreciate the conditionality that relates mind and matter. We see with the greatest freshness and immediacy that mind causes matter - as when our intention to lift the foot initiates the physical sensations of movement, and we see that matter causes mind - as when a physical sensation of strong heat generates a wish to move our walking meditation into a shady spot. The insight into cause and effect can take a great variety of forms; but when it arises, our life seem far more simple to us than ever before. Our life is no more than a chain of mental and physical causes and effects. This is the second insight in the classical progress of insight.

As we develop concentration we see even more deeply that these phenomena of the lifting process are impermanent, impersonal, appearing and disappearing one by one at fantastic speed. This is the next level of insight, the next aspect of existence that concentrated awareness becomes capable of seeing directly. There is no one behind what is happening; the phenomena arise and pass away as an empty process, according to the law of cause and effect. This illusion of movement and solidity is like a movie. To ordinary perception it seems full of characters and objects, all the semblances of a world. But if we slow the movie down we will see that it is actually composed of separate, static frames of film.

Discovering the Path by Walking

When one is very mindful during a single lifting process that is to say, when the mind is with the movement, penetrating with mindfulness into the true nature of what is happening - at that moment, the path to liberation taught by the Buddha opens up. The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path, often known as the Middle Way or Middle Path, consists of the eight factors of right view or understanding, right thought or aim, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. During any moment of strong mindfulness, five of the eight path factors come alive in consciousness. There is right effort; there is mindfulness; there is one-pointedness or concentration; there is right aim; and as we begin to have insight into the true nature of the phenomena, right view also arises. And during a moment when these five factors of the Eightfold Path are present, consciousness is completely free from any sort of defilement.

As we make use of that purified consciousness to penetrate into the true nature of what is happening, we become free of the delusion or illusion of self; we see only bare phenomena coming and going. When insight gives us intuitive comprehension of the mechanism of cause and effect, how mind and mailer are related to one another, we free ourselves of misconceptions about the nature of phenomena. Seeing that each object lasts only for a moment we free ourselves of the illusion of permanence, the illusion of continuity. As we understand

impermanence and its underlying unsatisfactoriness, we are freed from the illusion that our mind and body are not suffering.

This direct seeing of impersonality brings freedom from pride and conceit, as well as freedom from the wrong view that we have an abiding self. When we carefully observe the lifting process, we see mind and body as unsatisfactory and so are freed from craving. These three states of mind - conceit, wrong view and craving - are called "the perpetuating *dhammas."* They help to perpetuate existence in *samsara,* the cycle of craving and suffering which is caused by ignorance of ultimate truth. Careful attention in walking meditation shatters the perpetuating dhammas, bringing us closer to freedom.

You can see that noting the lifting of one's foot has incredible possibilities! These are no less present in moving the foot forward and in placing it on the ground. Naturally the depth and detail of awareness described in these walking instructions should also be applied to noting the abdominal movement in sitting, and all other physical movements.

Five Benefits of Walking Meditation

The Buddha described live additional, specific benefits of walking meditation. The first is that one who does walking meditation will have the stamina to go on long journeys. This was important in the Buddha's time, when *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunis,* monks and nuns, had no form of transportation other than their feet and legs. You who are meditating today can consider yourselves to be bhikkhus, and can think of this benefit simply as physical strengthening.

The second benefit is that walking meditation brings stamina for the practice of meditation itself. During walking meditation a double effort is needed. In addition to the ordinary, mechanical effort needed to lift the foot, there is also the mental effort to be aware of the movement - and this is the factor of right effort from the Noble Eightfold Path. If this double effort continues through the movements of lifting, pushing and placing, it strengthens the capacity for that strong, consistent mental effort all yogis know is crucial to vipassana practice.

Thirdly, according to the Buddha, a balance between sitting and walking contributes to good health, which in turn speeds progress in practice. Obviously it is difficult to meditate when we are sick. Too much sitting can cause many physical ailments. But the shift of posture and the movements of walking revive the muscles and stimulate circulation, helping prevent illness.

The fourth benefit is that walking meditation assists digestion. Improper digestion produces a lot of discomfort and is thus a hindrance to practice. Walking keeps the bowels clear, minimizing sloth and torpor. After a meal and before sitting, one should do a good walking meditation to forestall drowsiness. Walking as soon as one gets up in the morning is also a good way to establish

mindfulness and to avoid a nodding head in the first sitting of the day.

Last, but not least of the benefits of walking is that it builds durable concentration. As the mind works to focus on each section of the movement during a walking session, concentration becomes continuous. Every step builds the foundation for the sitting that follows, helping the mind stay with the object from moment to moment - eventually to reveal the true nature of reality at the deepest level. This is why I use the simile of a car battery. If a car is never driven, its battery runs down. A yogi who never does walking meditation will have a difficult time getting any where when he or she sits down on the cushion. But one who is diligent in walking will automatically carry strong mindfulness and firm concentration into sitting meditation.

I hope that all of you will be successful in completely carrying out this practice. May you be pure in your precepts, cultivating them in speech and action thus creating the conditions for developing samadhi and wisdom.

May you follow these meditation instructions carefully, noting each moment's experience with deep, accurate and precise mindfulness, so that you will penetrate into the true nature of reality. May you see how mind and matter constitute all experiences, how these two are interrelated by cause and effect, how all experiences are characterised by impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and absence of self so that you may eventually realize *nibbana* - the unconditioned state that uproots mental defilements - here and now.

The Interview

Vipassana meditation is like planting a garden. We have the seed of clear and complete vision, which is the mindfulness with which we observe phenomena. In order to cultivate this seed, nurture the plant, and reap its fruit of transcendent wisdom, there are five procedures we must follow. These are called the Five Protections, or the Five *Nuggahitas.*

The Five Protections

As gardeners do, we must build a fence around our little plot to protect against large animals, deer and rabbits, who might devour our tender plant as soon as it tries to sprout. This first protection is *sila nuggahita,* morality's protection against gross and wild behaviour which agitates the mind and prevents concentration and wisdom from ever appearing.

Second, we must water the seed. This means listening to discourses on the Dhamma and reading texts, then carefully applying the understanding we have

gained. Just as overwatering will rot a seed, our goal here is only clarification. It is definitely not to bewilder ourselves getting lost in a maze of concepts. This second protection is called *sutta nuggahita.*

The third protection is the one I will dwell on here. It is *sakaccha nuggahita,* discussion with a teacher, and it is likened to the many processes involved in cultivating a plant. Plants need different things at different times. Soil may need to be loosened around the roots, but not too much, or the roots will lose their grip in the soil. Leaves must be trimmed, again with care. Overshadowing plants must be cut down. In just this way, when we discuss our practice with a teacher, the teacher will give different instructions depending on what is needed to keep us on the right path.

The fourth protection is *samatha nuggahita,* the protection of concentration, which keeps off the caterpillars and weeds of unwholesome states of mind. As we practice we make a strong effort to be aware of whatever is actually arising at the six sense doors — eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind — in the present moment. When the mind is sharply focused and energetic in this way, greed, hatred and delusion have no opportunity to creep in. Thus, concentration can be compared to weeding the area around the plant, or to applying a very wholesome and natural type of pesticide.

If these first four protections are present, insights have the opportunity to blossom. However, yogis tend to become attached to early insights and unusual experiences related to strong concentration. Unfortunately, this will hinder their practice from ripening into the deeper levels of vipassana. Here, the fifth protection, *vipassana nuggahita,* comes into play. This is meditation which continues forcefully at a high level, not stopping to dawdle in the enjoyment of peace of mind nor other pleasures of concentration. Craving for these pleasures is called *nikanti tanha* It is subtle, like cobwebs, aphids, mildew, tiny spiders — sticky little things that can eventually choke off a plant's growth.

Even if a yogi gets caught in such booby traps, however, a good teacher can find out about this in the interview and nudge him or her back onto the straight path. This is why discussing one's experiences with a teacher is such an important protection for meditation practice.

The Interview Process

During an intensive vipassana retreat, personal interviews are held as often as possible, ideally every day. Interviews are formally structured. After the yogi presents his or her experiences as described below, the teacher may ask questions relating to particular details before giving a pithy comment or instruction

The interview process is quite simple. You should be able to communicate

the essence of your practice in about ten minutes. Consider that you are reporting on your research into yourself, which is what vipassana actually is. Try to adhere to the standards used in the scientific world brevity, accuracy and precision.

First, report how many hours of sitting you did and how many of walking m the most recent twenty-four-hour period. If you are quite truthful and honest about this, it will show the sincerity of your practice. Next, describe your sitting practice. It is not necessary to describe each sitting in detail. If sittings are similar, you may combine their traits together in a general report. Try using details from the clearest sitting or sittings. Begin your description with the primary object of meditation, the rise and fall of the abdomen. After thin you may add other objects that arose at any of the six sense doors.

After describing the sitting, go into your walking practice. Here you must only describe experiences directly connected with your walking movements — do not include a range of objects as you might in reporting a sitting. If you use the three-part method of lifting, moving and placing in your walking meditation try to include each segment and the experiences you had with it

What Occurred, How You Noted It, What Happened to It

For all of these objects, indeed with any object of meditation, please report your experience in three phases. One, you identify what occurred. Two, you report how you noted it. And three, you describe what you saw, or felt, or understood, that is, what happened when you noted it.

Let us take as an example the primary object, the rising and falling movement of the abdomen. The first thing to do is to identify the occurrence of the rising process, "Rising occurred"

The second phase is to note it, give it a silent verbal label, "I noted it as 'rising.'

The third phase is to describe what happened to the rising

"As I noted 'rising,' this is what I experienced, the different sensations. I felt This was the behavior of the sensations at that time"

Then you continue the interview by using the same three-phase description for the falling process and the other objects that arise during sitting. You mention the object's occurrence, describe how you noted it, and relate your subsequent experiences until the object disappears or your attention moves elsewhere.

Perhaps an analogy will serve to clarify Imagine that I am sitting in front of

you, and suddenly I raise my hand into the air and open it so that you can see that I am holding an apple. You direct your attention toward this apple, you recognize it and (because this is an analogy) you say the word "apple" to yourself. Now you go on to discern that the apple is red, round and shiny. At last I slowly close my hand so that the apple disappears.

How would you report your experience of the apple, if the apple were your primary object of meditation? You would say, "The apple appeared I noted it as 'apple' and slowly disappeared"

Thus, you would have reported in a precise way on the three phases of your involvement with the apple. First, there was the moment when the apple appeared and you became able to perceive it. Second, you directed your attention to the apple and recognized what it was, since you were "practicing meditation" with the apple, you made the particular effort to label it verbally in your mind. Third, you continued attending to the apple and discerned its qualities, as well as the manner of its passing out of your awareness. This three-step process is the same one you must follow in actual vipassana meditation, except, of course, that you observe and report on your experiences of the rising and falling of your abdomen. One warning your duty to observe the fictitious apple does not extend to imagining the apple's juiciness or visualizing yourself eating it. Similarly, in a meditation interview, you must restrict your descriptions to what you have experienced directly, rather than what you may imagine visualize and opine about the object.

As you can see, this style of reporting is a guide for how awareness should be functioning in actual vipassana meditation. For this reason, meditation interviews are helpful for an additional reason beyond the chance to receive a teacher's guidance. Yogis often find that being required to produce a report of this kind has a galvanizing effect on their meditation practice, for it asks them to focus on their experiences as clearly as they possibly can.

Awareness, Accuracy, Perseverance

It is not enough to look at the object indifferently, haphazardly or in an unmindful, automatic way. This is not a practice where you mindlessly recite some mental formula. You must look at the object with full commitment, with all of your heart. Directing your whole attention toward the object, as accurately as possible, you keep your attention there so that you can penetrate into the object's true nature.

Despite our best efforts, the mind may not always be so well-behaved as to remain with our abdomen. It wanders off. At this point a new object, the wandering mind, has arisen. How do we handle this? We become aware of the wandering. This is the first phase. Now the second phase we label it as "wandering, wandering" How soon after its arising were we aware of the

wandering? One second, two minutes, half an hour? And what happens after we label it? Does the wandering mind disappear instantly? Does the mind just keep on wandering? Or do the thoughts reduce in intensity and eventually disappear? Does a new object arise before we have seen the disappearance of the old one? If you cannot note the wandering mind at all, you should tell the teacher about this, too.

If the wandering mind disappears, you come back to the rising and falling. You should make a point to describe whether you are able to come back to it. In your reports it is good, also, to say how long the mind usually remained with the rising and falling movements before a new object arose.

Pains and aches, unpleasant sensations, are sure to arise after some time of sitting. Say an itch suddenly appears — a new object. You label it as "itching" Does the itch get worse or remain the same? Does it change or disappear? Do new objects arise, such as a wish to scratch? All this should be described as precisely as possible. It is the same with visions and sights, sounds and tastes, heat and cold. tightness, vibrations, tinglings, the unending procession of objects of consciousness. No matter what the object, you only have to apply the same three-step principle to it.

All of this process is done as a silent investigation, coming very close to our experience — not asking ourselves a lot of questions and getting lost in thought. What is important to the teacher is whether you could be aware of whatever object has arisen, whether you had the accuracy of mind to be mindful of it, and the perseverance to observe it fully. Be honest with your teacher. If you are unable to find the object, or note it, or experience anything at all after making a mental label, it may not always mean that you are practicing poorly! A clear and precise report enables the teacher to assess your practice, then point out mistakes or make corrections to put you back on the right path. May you benefit from these interview instructions. May a teacher someday help you help yourself.

2. CUTTING THROUGH TO ULTIMATE REALITY by Sharpening the Controlling Faculties

Vipassana meditation can be seen as a process of developing certain positive mental factors until they are powerful enough to dominate the state of the mind quite continuously. These factors are called "the controlling faculties", and they are five in number: faith, effort or energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. Especially in an intensive retreat setting, proper practice develops

strong and durable faith, powerful effort, deep concentration, penetrative mindfulness, and the unfolding of more and more profound insight or wisdom. This final product, intuitive wisdom or panna;, is the force in the mind which cuts through into the deepest truth about reality, and thus liberates us from ignorance and its results: suffering, delusion, and all the forms of unhappiness.

For this development to occur, however, the appropriate causes must be present. Nine causes lead to the growth of the controlling faculties; they are listed here, and will be discussed in more detail below. The first cause is attention directed toward the impermanence of all objects of consciousness. The second is an attitude of care and respect in meditation practice. The third is maintaining an unbroken continuity of awareness. The fourth cause is an environment that supports meditation. The fifth is remembering circumstances or behavior that have been helpful in one's past meditation practice so that one can maintain or recreate those conditions, especially when difficulties may arise. The sixth is cultivating the qualities of mind which lead toward enlightenment. The seventh is willingness to work in tensely in meditation practice. The eighth is patience and perseverance in the face of pain or other obstacles. The ninth and last cause for the development of the controlling faculties is a determination to continue practising until one reaches the goal of liberation.

A yogi can travel far in this practice if he or she fulfils even just the first three causes for the controlling faculties to arise. That is, the yogi's mental state will come to be characterised by faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom if she or he is aware of the passing away of mental and physical phenomena meticulously, respectfully, and with persistent continuity. Under these conditions, the inner hindrances to meditation will soon be removed. The controlling faculties will calm the mind and clear it of disturbances. If you are such a yogi, you will experience a tranquillity you may never have felt before. You may be filled with awe. "Fantastic, it's really true! All those teachers talk about peace and calm and now I'm really experiencing it!" Thus faith, the first of the controlling faculties, will have arisen out of your practice.

This particular kind of faith is called "preliminary verified faith." Your own experience leads you to feel that the further promises of the Dhamma may actually be true.

With faith comes a natural inspiration, an upsurge of energy. When energy is present, effort follows. You will say to yourself, "This is just the beginning. If I work a little harder, I'll have experiences even better than this." A renewed effort guides the mind to hit its target of observation in each moment. Thus mindfulness consolidates and deepens.

Mindfulness has the uncanny ability to bring about concentration, one-pointedness of mind. When mindfulness penetrates into the object of observation moment by moment, the mind gains the capacity to remain stable

and undistracted, content within the object. In this natural fashion, concentration becomes well-established and strong. In general, the stronger one's mindfulness, the stronger one's concentration will be.

With faith, effort, mindfulness and concentration, four of the five controlling faculties have been assembled. Wisdom, the fifth, needs no special introduction. If the first four factors are present, wisdom or insight unfolds of itself. One begins to see very clearly, intuitively, how mind and matter are separate entities, and begins also to understand in a very special way how mind and matter are connected by cause and effect. Upon each insight, one's verified faith deepens.

A yogi who has seen objects arising and passing away from moment to moment feels very fulfilled. "It's fabulous. Just moment after moment of these phenomena with no self behind them. No one at home." This discovery brings a sense of great relief and ease of mind. Subsequent insights into impermanence, suffering and absence of self have a particularly strong capacity to stimulate faith. They fill us with powerful conviction that the Dhamma as it has been told to us is authentic.

Vipassana practice can be compared to sharpening a knife against a whetstone. One must hold the blade at just the right angle, not too high or too low, and apply just the right amount of pressure. Moving the knife blade consistently against the stone, one works continuously and until the first edge has been developed. Then one flips the knife over to sharpen the other edge, applying the same pressure at the same angle. This image is given in the Buddhist scriptures. Precision of angle is like meticulousness in practice, and pressure and movement are like continuity of mindfulness. If meticulousness and continuity are really present in your practice, rest assured that in a short time your mind will be sharp enough to cut through to the truth about existence.

ONE: ATTENTION TO IMPERMANENCE

The first cause for development of the controlling faculties is to notice that everything which arises will also dissolve and pass away. During meditation one observes mind and matter at all the six sense doors. One should approach this process of observation with the intention to notice that everything which appears will, in turn, dissolve. As you are no doubt aware, this idea can only be confirmed by actual observation.

This attitude is a very important preparation for practice. A preliminary acceptance that things are impermanent and transitory prevents the reactions that might occur when you discover these facts — sometimes painfully — through your own experience. Without this acceptance, moreover, a student might spend

considerable time with the contrary assumption, that the objects of this world might be permanent, an assumption that can block the development of insight. In the beginning you can take impermanence on faith. As practice deepens, this faith will be verified by personal experience.

TWO: CARE AND RESPECT

The second basis for strengthening the controlling faculties is an attitude of great care in pursuing the meditation practice. It is essential to treat the practice with the utmost reverence and meticulousness. To develop this attitude it may be helpful to reflect on the benefits you are likely to enjoy through practice. Properly practised, mindfulness of body, feelings, mind and mind objects leads to the purification of the mind, the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, the complete destruction of physical pain and mental distress, and the attainment of nibbana. The Buddha called it *satipatthana* meditation, meaning meditation on the four foundations of mindfulness. Truly it is priceless!

Remembering this, you may be inspired to be very careful and attentive toward the objects of awareness that arise at the six sense doors. On a meditation retreat, you should also try to slow down your movements as much as possible, appreciating the fact that your mindfulness is at an infant stage. Slowing down gives mindfulness the chance to keep pace with the movements of the body, noting each one in detail.

The scriptures illustrate this quality of care and meticulousness with the image of a person crossing a river on a very narrow footbridge. There is no railing, and swift water runs below. Obviously, this person cannot skip and run across the bridge. He or she must go step by step, with care.

A meditator can also be compared to a person carrying a bowl brimful of oil. You can imagine the degree of care that is required not to spill it. This same degree of mindfulness should be present in your practice.

This second example was given by the Buddha himself. It seems there was a group of monks residing in a forest, ostensibly practising meditation. They were sloppy, though. At the end of a sitting, they would leap up suddenly and unmindfully. Walking from place to place, they were careless; they looked at the birds in the trees and the clouds in the sky, not restraining their minds at all. Naturally they made no progress in practice.

When the Buddha came to know of this, his investigation showed that the fault lay in the monks' lack of respect and reverence for the Dhamma, for the teaching, and for meditation. The Buddha then approached the monks and spoke

to them about the image of carrying a bowl of oil. Inspired by his *sutta,* or discourse, the monks resolved thereafter to be meticulous and careful in all that they did. As a result they were enlightened in a short time.

You can verify this result in your own experience on a retreat. Slowing down, moving with great care, you will be able to apply a quality of reverence in noting your experience. The slower you move, the faster you will progress in your meditation.

Of course, in this world one must adapt to the prevailing circumstances. Some situations require speed. If you cruise the highway at a snail's pace, you might end up dead or in jail. At a hospital, in contrast, patients must be treated with great gentleness and allowed to move slowly. If doctors and nurses hurry them along so that the hospital's work can be finished more efficiently, the patients will suffer and perhaps end up on a mortuary slab.

Yogis must comprehend their situation, wherever they are, and adapt to it. On retreat, or in any other situation, it is good to be considerate and to move at a normal speed if others are waiting behind you. However, you must also understand that one's primary goal is to develop mindfulness, and so when you are alone it is appropriate to revert to creeping about. You can eat slowly, you can wash your face, brush your teeth and bathe with great mindfulness — as long as no one is waiting in line for the shower or tub.

THREE: UNBROKEN CONTINUITY

Persevering continuity of mindfulness is the third essential factor in developing the controlling faculties. One should try to be with the moment as much as possible, moment after moment, without any breaks in between. In this way mindfulness can be established, and its momentum can increase. Defending our mindfulness prevents the *kilesas,* the harmful and painful qualities of greed, hatred and delusion, from infiltrating and carrying us off into oblivion. It is a fact of life that the kilesas cannot arise in the presence of strong mindfulness. When the mind is free of kilesas, it becomes unburdened, light and happy.

Do whatever is necessary to maintain continuity. Do one action at a time. When you change postures, break down the movement into single units and note each unit with the utmost care. When you arise from sitting, note the intention to open the eyelids, and then the sensations that occur when the lids begin to move. Note lifting the hand from the knee, shifting the leg, and so on. Throughout the day, be fully aware of even the tiniest actions — not just sitting, standing, walking and lying, but also closing your eyes, turning your head, turning

doorknobs and so forth.

Apart from the hours of sleeping, yogis on retreat should be continuously mindful. Continuity should be so strong, in fact, that there is no time at all for reflection, no hesitation, no thinking, no reasoning, no comparing of one's experiences with the things one has read about meditation — just time enough to apply this bare awareness.

The scriptures compare practising the Dhamma to starting a fire. In the days before the invention of matches or magnifying glasses, fire had to be started by the primitive means of friction. People used an instrument like a bow, held horizontally. In its looped string they entwined a vertical stick whose point was inserted into a slight depression in a board, which was in turn filled with shavings or leaves. As people moved the bow back and forth, the stick's point twirled, eventually igniting the leaves or shavings. Another method was simply to roll that same stick between the palms of the hands. In either case, people rubbed and rubbed until sufficient friction accumulated to ignite the shavings. Imagine what would happen if they rubbed for ten seconds and then rested for five seconds to think about it. Do you think a fire would start? In just this way, a continuous effort is necessary to start the fire of wisdom.

Have you ever studied the behaviour of a chameleon? The scriptures use this lizard to illustrate discontinuous practice. Chameleons approach their goals in an interesting way. Catching sight of a delicious fly or a potential mate, a chameleon rushes suddenly forward, but does not arrive all at once. It scurries a short distance, then stops and gazes at the sky, tilting its head this way and that. Then it rushes ahead a bit more and stops again to gaze. It never reaches its destination in the first rush.

People who practise in fits and starts, being mindful for a stretch and then stopping to daydream, are chameleon yogis. Chameleons manage to survive despite their lack of continuity, but a yogi's practice may not. Some yogis feel called to reflect and think each time they have a new experience, wondering which stage of insight they have reached. Others do not need novelty, they think and worry about familiar things.

"I feel tired today. Maybe I didn't sleep enough. Maybe I ate too much. A little nap might be just the ticket. My foot hurts. I wonder if a blister is developing. That would affect my whole meditation! Maybe I should just open my eyes and check." Such are the hesitations of chameleon yogis.

FOUR: SUPPORTIVE CONDITIONS

The fourth cause for developing the controlling faculties is to make sure that suitable conditions are met for insights to unfold. Proper, suitable and appropriate activities can bring about insight knowledge. Seven types of suitability should be met in order to create an environment that is supportive of meditation practice.

The first suitability is that of place. A meditative environment should be well-furnished, well-supported, a place where it is possible to gain insight.

Second is what is known as suitability of resort. This refers to the ancient practice of daily alms rounds. A monk's place of meditation should be far enough from a village to avoid distraction, but near enough so that he can depend on the villagers for daily alms food. For lay yogis, food must be easily and consistently available, yet perhaps not distractingly so. Under this heading, one should avoid places which ruin one's concentration. This means busy, active places where the mind is likely to be distracted from its meditation object. In short, a certain amount of quiet is important, but one must not go so far from the noises of civilization that one cannot obtain what one needs to survive.

The third suitability is that of speech. During a retreat, suitable speech is of a very limited kind and quantity. The commentaries define it as listening to Dhamma talks. We can add participating in Dhamma discussions with the teacher — that is, interviews. It is essential at times to engage in discussions of the practice, especially when one is confused or unsure about how to proceed.

But remember that anything in excess is harmful. I once taught in a place where there was a potted plant which my attendant was overzealous in watering. All its leaves fell off. A similar thing could happen to your samadhi if you get involved in too many Dhamma discussions. And one should carefully evaluate even the discourses of one's teacher. The general rule is to exercise discretion as to whether what one is hearing will develop the concentration that has already arisen, or cause to arise concentration that has not yet arisen. If the answer is negative, one should avoid the situation, perhaps even choosing not to attend the teacher's discourses or not requesting extra interviews.

Yogis on intensive retreat should of course avoid any kind of conversation as much as possible, especially chatting about worldly affairs. Even serious discussion of the Dhamma is not always appropriate during intensive practice. One should avoid debating points of dogma with fellow yogis on retreat. Thoroughly unsuitable during retreats are conversations about food, place, business, the economy, politics and so forth; these are called "animal speech."

The purpose of having this kind of prohibition is to prevent distractions from arising in the yogi's mind. Lord Buddha, out of deep compassion for meditating yogis, said, "For an ardent meditator, speech should not be indulged. If indeed

speech is resorted to frequently, it will cause much distraction."

Of course it may become really necessary to talk during a retreat. If so, you should be careful not to exceed what is absolutely necessary to communicate. You should also be mindful of the process of speaking. First there will be a desire to speak. Thoughts will arise in the mind as to what to say and how to say it. You should note and carefully label all such thoughts, the mental preparation for speaking; and then the actual act of speaking itself, the physical movements involved. The movements of your lips and face, and any accompanying gestures, should be made the objects of mindfulness.

Some years ago in Burma there was a high-ranking government official who had just retired. He was a very ardent Buddhist. He had read a lot of Buddhist scriptures and literature in the fine translations available in Burmese and had also spent some time meditating. His practice was not strong, but he had a lot of general knowledge and he wanted to teach, so he became a teacher.

One day he came to the center in Rangoon to meditate. When I give instructions to yogis, usually I explain the practice and then compare my instructions to the scriptural texts, trying to reconcile any apparent differences. This gentleman immediately began to ask me, "From where did this quotation come and what is its reference?" I advised him politely to forget about this concern and to continue his meditation, but he could not. For three days in a row, he did the same thing at each interview.

Finally I asked him, "Why are you here? Did you come here to be my student, or to try to teach me?" It seemed to me he had only come to show off his general knowledge, not because he wished to meditate.

The man said airily, "Oh, I'm the student and you're the teacher."

I said, "I've been trying to let you know this in a subtle way for three days, but I must now be more direct with you. You are like the minister whose job it was to marry off brides and bridegrooms. On the day it was his turn to get married, instead of standing where the bridegroom should stand, he went up to the altar and conducted the ceremony. The congregation was very surprised." Well, the gentleman got the point; he admitted his error and there after became an obedient student.

Yogis who truly want to understand the Dhamma will not seek to imitate this gentleman. In fact it is said in the texts that no matter how learned or experienced one may be, during a period of meditation one should behave like a person who is incapable of doing things out of his or her own initiative, but is also very meek and obedient. In this regard, I'd like to share with you an attitude I developed in my youth. When I am not skilled, competent or experienced in a particular field, I do not intrude in a situation. Even if I am skilled, competent

and experienced in a field, I do not intrude unless someone asks for my advice.

The fourth suitability is that of person, which chiefly relates to the meditation teacher. If the instruction given by one's teacher helps one to progress, developing concentration that has already arisen, or bringing about concentration that has not yet arisen, then one can say that this teacher is suitable.

Two more aspects of suitability of person have to do with the community that supports one's practice, and one's own relationship with the community of other people. In an intensive retreat, yogis require a great deal of support. In order to develop their mindfulness and concentration, they abandon worldly activities. Thus, they need friends who can perform certain tasks that would be distracting for a yogi in intensive practice, such as shopping for and preparing food, repairing the shelter, and so on. For those engaged in group practice, it is important to consider one's own effect on the community. Delicate consideration for other yogis is quite helpful. Abrupt or noisy movements can be very disruptive to others. Bearing this in mind, one can become a suitable person with respect to other yogis.

The fifth area of suitability, of food, means that the diet one finds personally appropriate is also supportive to progress in meditation. However, one must bear in mind that it is not always possible to fill one's every preference. Group retreats can be quite large, and meals are cooked for every one at once. At such times, it is best to adopt an attitude of accepting whatever is served. If one's meditation is disturbed by feelings of lack or distaste, it is all right to try to rectify this if convenient.

The Story of Matikamata

Once sixty monks were meditating in the forest. They had a laywoman supporter named Matikamata, who was very devout. She tried to figure out what they might like, and every day she cooked enough food for all of them. One day Matikamata approached the monks and asked whether a lay person could meditate as they did. "Of course," she was told, and they gave her instructions. Happily she went back and began to practice. She kept up her meditation even while she was cooking for the monks and carrying out her household chores. Eventually she reached the third stage of enlightenment, *anagami* or nonreturner; and be cause of the great merit she had accumulated in the past, she also had psychic powers such as the deva eye and deva ear — i.e. the abilities to see and hear distant things — and the ability to read people's minds.

Filled with joy and gratitude, Matikamata said to herself, "The Dhamma I've realized is very special. I'm such a busy person, though, looking after my household chores as well as feeding the monks every day, I'm sure those monks have progressed much further than I." With her psychic powers she investigated

the meditation progress of the sixty monks, and saw to her shock that none of them had had even the vaguest ghost of a vipassana insight.

"What's wrong here?" Matikamata wondered. Psychically, she looked into the monks' situation to determine where the unsuitability lay. It was not in the place they were meditating. It was not because they weren't getting along — but it was that they were not getting the right food! Some of the monks liked sour tastes, others preferred the salty. Some liked hot peppers and others liked cakes, and still others preferred vegetables. Out of great gratitude for the meditation instructions she had received from them, which had led her to profound enlightenment, Matikamata began to cater to each monk's preference. As a result, all of the monks soon became *arahants*, fully enlightened ones.

This woman's rapid and deep attainments, as well as her intelligence and dedication, provide a good model for people like parents and other caretakers, who serve the needs of others, but who do not need to relinquish aspirations for deep insights.

While on this subject I would like to talk about vegetarianism. Some hold the view that it is moral to eat only vegetables. In Theravada Buddhism there is no notion that this practice leads to an exceptional perception of the truth.

The Buddha did not totally prohibit the eating of meat. He only lay down certain conditions for it. For example, an animal must not be killed expressly for one's personal consumption. The monk Devadatta asked him to lay down a rule expressly forbidding the eating of meat, but the Buddha, after thorough consideration, refused to do so.

In those days as now, the majority of people ate a mixture of animal and vegetable food. Only Brahmins, or the upper caste, were vegetarian. When monks went begging for their livelihood, they had to take whatever was offered by donors of any caste. To distinguish between vegetarian and carnivorous donors would have affected the spirit of this activity. Furthermore, both Brabmins and members of other castes were able to join the order of monks and nuns. The Buddha took this fact into consideration as welt with all of its implications.

Thus, one needn't restrict oneself to vegetarianism to practice the Dhamma. Of course, it is healthy to eat a balanced vegetarian diet, and if your motivation for not eating meat is compassion, this impulse is certainly whole some. If, on the other hand, your metabolism is adjusted to eating meat, or if for some other reason of health it is necessary for you to eat meat this should not be considered sinful or in any way detrimental to the practice. A law that cannot be obeyed by the majority is ineffective.

The sixth type of suitability is that of weather. Human beings have a

fantastic ability to adapt to weather. No matter how hot or cold it may be, we devise methods of making ourselves comfortable. When these methods are limited or unavailable, one's practice can be disrupted. At such times it may be better to practice in a temperate climate, if possible.

The seventh and last kind of suitability is that of posture. Posture here refers to the traditional four postures: sitting, standing, walking and lying down. Sitting is best for *samatha* or tranquillity meditation. In the tradition of Mahasi Sayadaw, vipassana practice is based on sitting and walking. For any type of meditation, once momentum builds, posture does not really matter; any of the four is suitable.

Beginning yogis should avoid the lying and the standing postures. The standing posture can bring about pain in a short while: tightness and pressure in the legs, which can disrupt the practice. The lying posture is problematic be cause it brings on drowsiness. In it there is not much effort being made to maintain the posture, and there is too much comfort.

Investigate your own situation to find out whether the seven types of suitability are present. If they are not, perhaps you should take steps to ensure they are fulfilled, so that your practice can develop. If this is done with the aim of making progress in your practice, it will not be self-centered.

FIVE: REAPPLYING HELPFUL CONDITIONS FROM THE PAST

The fifth way of sharpening the controlling faculties is to bring about the completion of meditative insight using what is called "the sign of samadhi." This refers to circumstances in which good practice has occurred before: good mindfulness and concentration. As we all know, practice is an up and down affair. At times we are high up in the clouds of samadhiland; at other times, we're really depressed, assaulted by kilesas, not mindful of anything. Using the sign of samadhi means that when you are up in those clouds, when mindfulness is strong, you should try to notice what circumstances led to this good practice. How are you working with the mind? What are the specific circumstances in which this good practice is occurring? The next time you get into a difficult situation, you may be able to remember the causes of good mindfulness and establish them again.

SIX: CULTIVATING THE FACTORS THAT LEAD TO ENLIGHTENMENT

The sixth way of sharpening the controlling faculties is cultivating the factors of enlightenment: mindfulness, investigation, energy, rapture or joy, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity. These qualifies of mind, or mental factors, are actually the causes which bring about enlightenment. When they are present and alive in one's mind, the moment of enlightenment is being encouraged, and may be said to be drawing nearer. Furthermore, the seven factors of enlightenment belong to what is known as "noble path and fruition consciousness." In Buddhism, we speak of "consciousnesses" when we mean specific, momentary types of consciousness — particular mental events, with recognizable characteristics. Path and fruition consciousness are the linked mental events that constitute an enlightenment experience. They are what is occurring when the mind shifts its attention from the conditioned realm to nibbana, or unconditioned reality. The result of such a shift is that certain defilements are uprooted, so that the mind is never the same afterwards.

While working to create the conditions for path and fruition consciousness, a yogi who understands the factors of enlightenment can use them to balance her or his meditation practice. The enlightenment factors of *effort, joy,* and *investigation* uplift the mind when it becomes depressed, while the factors of *tranquility, concentration,* and *equanimity* calm the mind when it becomes hyperactive.

Many times a yogi may feel depressed and discouraged, having no mindfulness, thinking that his or her practice is going terribly badly. Mindfulness may not be able to pick up objects as it has in the past. At such a time it is essential for a yogi to pull out of this state, brighten the mind. He or she should go in search of encouragement and inspiration. One way to do this is by listening to a good Dhamma talk. A talk can bring about the enlightenment factor of joy or rapture; or it can inspire greater effort, or it can deepen the enlightenment factor of investigation by providing knowledge about practice. These three factors of enlight enment — rapture, effort and investigation — are most help ful in facing depression and discouragement.

Once an inspiring talk has brought up rapture, energy or investigation, you should use this opportunity to try to focus the mind very clearly on objects of observation, so that the objects appear very clearly to the mind's eye.

At other times, yogis may have an unusual experience, or for some other reason may find themselves flooded with exhilaration, rapture and joy. The mind becomes active and overenthusiastic. On a retreat you can spot such yogis

beaming, walking around as if they were six feet above the ground. Due to excess energy, the mind slips; it refuses to concentrate on what is happening in the present moment.

If attention touches the target object at all, it immediately goes off on a tangent.

If you find yourself excessively exhilarated, you should restore your equilibrium by developing the three enlight enment factors of tranquility, concentration and equanimity. A good way to start is by realizing that your energy is indeed excessive; and then reflecting. "There's no point in hurrying. The Dhamma will unfold by itself. I should just sit back coolly and watch with gentle awareness." This stimulates the factor of tranquility. Then, once the energy is cooled, one can begin to apply concentration. The prac tical method of doing this is to narrow down the meditation. Instead of noting many objects, cut down to concentrate more fully on a few. The mind will soon renew its normal, slower pace. Lastly, one can adopt a stance of equanimity, cajoling and soothing the mind with reflections like, "A yogi has no preferences. There's no point in hurrying. The only thing that matters is for me to watch whatever is happening, good or bad."

If you can keep your mind in balance, soothing excitement and lightening up depression, you can be sure that wisdom will shortly unfold on its own.

Actually, the person best qualified to rectify imbalances in practice is a competent meditation teacher. If he or she keeps steady track of students through interviews, a teacher can recognize and remedy the many kinds of excesses that yogis are susceptible to.

I would like to remind all yogis never to feel discouraged when they think something is wrong with their meditation. Yogis are like babies or young children. As you know, babies go through various stages of development. When babies are in a transition from one stage of development to another, they tend to go though a lot of psychological and physical upheaval. They seem to get irritated very easily and are difficult to care for. They cry and wail at odd times. An inexperienced mother may worry about her baby during periods like this. But truly, if infants don't go through this suffering they will never mature and grow up. Babies' distress is often a sign of developmental progress. So if you feel your practice is falling apart, do not worry. You may be just like that little child who is in a transition between stages of growth.

SEVEN: COURAGEOUS EFFORT

The seventh way of developing the controlling faculties is to practice with courageous effort so much so that you are willing to sacrifice your body and life in order to continue the practice uninterrupted. This means giving rather less consideration toward the body than we tend to be accustomed to give to it. Rather than spending time beautifying ourselves or catering to our wishes for greater comfort, we devote as much energy as possible to going forward in meditation.

Although it may feel very youthful right now, our body becomes completely useless when we die. What use can one make of a corpse? The body is like a very fragile container which can be used as long as it is intact, but the moment it drops on the floor, it is of no further help to us.

While we are alive and in reasonably good health, we have the good fortune to be able to practice. Let us try to extract the precious essence from our bodies before it is too late, before our bodies become useless corpses! Of course, it is not our aim to hasten this event. We should also try to be sensible, and to maintain this body's health, if only for our practice to continue.

You might ask what essence one can extract from the body. A scientific study was once made to determine the market value of the substances composing the human body: iron, calcium and so on. I believe it came to less than one American dollar, and the cost of extracting all those components was many times greater than this total value. Without such a process of extraction, a corpse is valueless, beyond providing compost for the soil. If a dead person's organs can be used for transplants into living bodies, this is good; but in this case, progress toward becoming an entirely lifeless and valueless corpse has only been delayed.

The body can be looked at as a rubbish dump, disgusting and full of impurities. Uncreative people have no use for things they might find in such a dump, but an innovative person understands the value of recycling. He or she may take a dirty, smelly thing off the rubbish heap and clean it and be able to use it again. There are many stories of people who have made millions from the recycling business.

From this rubbish heap we call our body, we can nonetheless extract gold through the practice of the Dhamma. One form of gold is sila, purity of conduct, the ability to tame and civilise one's actions. After further extraction, the body yields up the controlling faculties of faith, mindfulness, effort, concentration and wisdom. These are priceless jewels which can be extracted from the body through meditation. When the controlling faculties are well-developed, the mind resists domination by greed, hatred and delusion. A person whose mind is free of these painful oppressive qualities experiences an exquisite happiness and peace that cannot be bought with money. His or her presence becomes calm and sweet so that others feel uplifted. This inner freedom is independent of all

circumstances and conditions, and it is only available as a result of ardent meditation practice.

Anyone can understand that painful mental states do not vanish just because we wish them to do so. Who has not wrestled with a desire they knew would hurt someone if they indulged it? Is there anyone who has never been in an irritable, grumpy mood and wished they were feeling happy and contented instead? Has anyone failed to experience the pain of being confused? It is possible to uproot the tendencies which create pain and dissatisfaction in our lives, but for most of us it is not easy. Spiritual work is as demanding as it is rewarding. Yet we should not be discouraged. The goal and result of vipassana meditation is to be free from all kinds, all shades and all levels of mental and physical suffering. If you desire this kind of freedom, you should rejoice that you have an opportunity to strive to achieve it.

The best time to strive is right now. If you are young, you should appreciate your good situation, for young people have the most energy to carry out the meditation practice. If you are older you may have less physical energy, but perhaps you have seen enough of life to have gained wise consideration, such as a personal understanding of life's fleetingness and unpredictability.

"Urgency Seized Me"

During the Buddha's time there was a young bhikkhu, or monk, who had come from a wealthy family. Young and robust, he'd had the chance to enjoy a wide variety of sense pleasures before his ordination. He was wealthy, he had many friends and relatives, and his wealth made available to him the full panoply of indulgences. Yet he renounced all this to seek liberation.

One day when the king of that country was riding through the forest, he came across this monk. The king said, "Venerable sir, you are young and robust; you are in the prime of youth. You come from a wealthy family and have lots of opportunities to enjoy yourself. Why did you leave your home and family to wear robes and live in solitude? Don't you feel lonely? Aren't you bored?"

The monk answered, "O great king, when I was listening to the Buddha's discourse that leads to arousing spiritual urgency, a great sense of urgency seized me. I want to extract the optimum utility from this body of mine in time before I die. That is why I gave up the worldly life and took these robes."

If you still are not convinced of the need to practice with great urgency, without attachment to body or life, the Buddha's words may also be helpful for you.

One should reflect, he said, on the fact that the whole world of beings is made up of nothing but mind and matter which have arisen but do not stay.

Mind and matter do not remain still for one single moment; they are in constant flux. Once we find ourselves in this body and mind, there is nothing we can do to prevent growth from taking place. When we are young we like to grow, but when we are old we are stuck in an irreversible process of decline.

We like to be healthy, but our wishes can never be guaranteed. We are plagued by sickness and illness, by pain and discomfort, throughout our existence. Immortal life is beyond our reach. All of us will die. Death is contrary to what we would wish for ourselves, yet we cannot prevent it. The only question is whether death will come sooner or later.

Not a single person on earth can guarantee our wishes regarding growth, health or immortality. People refuse to accept these facts. The old try to look young. Scientists develop all manner of cures and contraptions to delay the process of human decay. They even try to revive the dead! When we are sick we take medicines to feel better. But even if we get well, we will get sick again. Nature cannot be deceived. We cannot escape old age and death.

This is the main weakness of beings: beings are devoid of security. There is no safe refuge from old age, disease and death. Look at other beings, look at animals, and most of all, look at yourself.

If you have practised deeply, these facts will come as no surprise to you. If you can see with intuitive insight how mental and physical phenomena arise endlessly from moment to moment, you know there is no refuge anywhere that you can run to. There is no security. Yet, if your insight has not reached this point, perhaps reflecting on the precariousness of life will cause some urgency to arise in you, and give you a strong impulse to practice. Vipassana meditation can lead to a place beyond all these fearsome things.

Beings have another great weakness: lack of possessions. This may sound strange. We are born. We begin procuring knowledge right away. We obtain credentials. Most of us get a job, and buy many items with the resulting wages. We call these our possessions, and on a relative level, that is what they are - no doubt about it. If possessions really belonged to us, though, we would never be separated from them. Would they break, or get lost, or stolen the way they do if we owned them in some ultimate sense? When human beings die there is nothing we can take with us. Everything gained, amassed, stored up and hoarded is left behind. Therefore it is said that all beings are possession-less.

All of our property must be left behind at the moment of death. Property is of three types, the first of which is immovable property: buildings, land, estates, and so forth. Conventionally these belong to you, but you must leave them behind when you die. The second type of property is moveable property: chairs, toothbrushes and clothing - all the things you carry along as you travel about during your existence on this planet. Then there is knowledge: arts and sciences,

the skills you use to sustain your life and that of others. As long as we have a body in good working order, this property of knowledge is essential. However, there is no insurance against losing that either. You may forget what you know, or you may be prevented from practising your specialty by a government decree or some other unfortunate event. If you are a surgeon you could badly break your arm, or you could meet with some other kind of attack on your well-being which leaves you too neurotic to continue your livelihood.

None of these kinds of possessions can bring any security during existence on earth, let alone during the afterlife. If one can understand that we possess nothing, and that life is extremely transitory, then we will feel much more peaceful when the inevitable comes to pass.

Our Only True Possession

However, there are certain things that follow human beings through the doors of death. This is *kamma* (Sanskrit: karma), the results of our actions. Our good and bad kammas follow us wherever we are; we cannot get away from them even if we want to.

Believing that kamma is your only true possession brings a strong wish to practice the Dhamma with ardour and thoroughness. You will understand that wholesome and beneficial deeds are an investment in your own future happiness, and harmful deeds will rebound upon you. Thus, you will do many things based on noble considerations of benevolence, generosity, and kindness. You will try to make donations to hospitals, to people suffering from calamity. You will support members of your family, the aged, the handicapped and underprivileged, your friends, and others who need help. You will want to create a better society by maintaining purity of conduct, taming your speech and actions. You will bring about a peaceful environment as you strive to meditate and tame the obsessive kilesas that arise in the heart. You will go through the stages of insight and eventually realize the ultimate goal. All of these meritorious deeds of *dana,* of giving; of sila, morality; and of *bhavana,* mental development or meditation - they will follow you after death, just as your shadow follows you wherever you go. Do not cease to cultivate the wholesome!

All of us are slaves of craving. It is ignoble, but it is true. Desire is insatiable. As soon as we get something, we find it is not as satisfying as we thought it would be, and we try something else. It is the nature of life, like trying to scoop up water in a butterfly net. Beings cannot become contented by following the dictates of desire, chasing after objects. Desire can never satisfy desire. If we understand this truth correctly, we will not seek satisfaction in this self-defeating way. This is why the Buddha said that contentment is the greatest wealth.

There is a story of a man who worked as a basket weaver. He was a simple

man who enjoyed weaving his baskets. He whistled and sang and passed the day happily as he worked. At night he retired to his little hut and slept well. One day a wealthy man passed by and saw this poor wretched basket weaver. He was filled with compassion and gave him a thousand dollars. "Take this," he said, "and go enjoy yourself."

The basket weaver took the money with much appreciation. He had never seen a thousand dollars in his life. He took it back to his ramshackle hut and was wondering where he could keep it. But his hut was not very secure.

He could not sleep all night because he was worrying about robbers, or even rats nibbling at his cash.

The next day he took his thousand dollars to work, but he did not sing or whistle because he was worrying so much about his money again. Once more, that night he did not sleep, and in the morning he returned the thousand dollars to the wealthy man, saying, "Give me back my happiness."

You may think that Buddhism discourages you from seeking knowledge or credentials, or from working hard to earn money so you can support yourself and family and friends and contribute to worthy causes and institutions. No. By all means, make use of your life and your intelligence, and obtain all these things legally and honestly. The point is to be contented with what you have. Do not become a slave of craving: that is the message. Reflect on the weaknesses of beings so that you can get the most from your body and life before you are too sick and old to practice and can only depart from this useless corpse.

EIGHT: PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE

If you practice with heroic effort, entertaining no considerate attachment to body or life, you can develop the liberating energy which will carry you through the higher stages of practice. Such a courageous attitude contains within itself not only the seventh, but also the eighth means of developing the controlling faculties. This eighth quality is patience and perseverance in dealing with pain, especially painful sensations in the body.

All yogis are familiar with the unpleasant sensations that can come up during the course of a single sitting, the suffering of the mind in reaction to these sensations, and on top of that, the mind's resistance to being controlled as it must be in the practice.

An hour's sitting requires a lot of work. First, you try to keep your mind on

the primary object as much as possible. This restraint and control can be very threatening to the mind, accustomed as it is to running wild. The process of maintaining attention becomes a strain. This strain of the mind, resisting control, is one form of suffering.

When the mind fills with resistance, often the body reacts also. Tension arises. In a short time you are besieged by painful sensations. What with the initial resistance and this pain on top of it, you've got quite a task on your hands. Your mind is constricted, your body is tight, you lose the patience to look directly at the physical pain. Now your mind goes completely bonkers. It may fill with aversion and rage. Your suffering is now threefold: the mind's initial resistance; the actual physical pain; and the mental suffering that results from physical suffering.

This would be a good time to apply the eighth cause for strengthening the controlling faculties, patience and perseverance, and try to look at the pain directly. If you are not prepared to confront pain in a patient way, you only leave open the door to the kilesas, like greed and anger. "Oh, I hate this pain. If only I could get back the wonderful comfort I had five minutes ago." In the presence of anger and greed, and in the absence of patience, the mind becomes confused and deluded as well. No object is clear, and you are unable to see the true nature of pain.

At such a time you will believe that pain is a thorn, a hindrance in your practice. You may decide to shift position in order to "concentrate better." If such movement becomes a habit, you will lose the chance to deepen your meditation practice. Calmness and tranquility of mind have their foundation in stillness of body.

Constant movement is actually a good way to conceal the true nature of pain. Pain may be right under your nose, the most predominant element of your experience, but you move your body so as not to look at it. You lose a wonderful opportunity to understand what pain really is.

In fact we have been living with pain ever since we were born on this planet. It has been close to us all our lives. Why do we run from it? If pain arises, look on it as a precious opportunity really to understand something familiar in a new and deeper way.

At times when you are not meditating, you can exercise patience toward painful sensations, especially if you are concentrating on something you are interested in. Say you are a person who really loves the game of chess. You sit in your chair and look very intently at the chessboard, where your opponent has just made a fantastic move, putting you in check. You may have been sitting on that chair for two hours, yet you will not feel your cramped position as you try to work out the strategy to escape from your predicament. Your mind is totally

lost in thought. If you do feel the pain, you may very well ignore it until you have achieved your goal.

It is even more important to exercise patience in the practice of meditation, which develops a much higher level of wisdom than does chess, and which gets us out of a more fundamental kind of predicament.

Strategies for Dealing with Pain

The degree of penetration into the true nature of phenomena depends very much on the level of concentration we can develop. The more one-pointed the mind, the more deeply it can penetrate and understand reality. This is particularly true when one is being aware of painful sensations. If concentration is weak, we will not really feel the discomfort which is always present in our bodies. When concentration begins to deepen, even the slightest discomfort becomes so very clear that it appears to be magnified and exaggerated. Most human beings are myopic in this sense. Without the eyeglasses of concentration, the world appears hazy, blurry and indistinct. But when we put them on, all is bright and clear. It is not the objects that have changed; it is the acuity of our sight.

When you look with the naked eye at a drop of water, you do not see much. If you put a sample under the microscope, however, you begin to see many things happening there. Many things are dancing and moving, fascinating to watch. If in meditation you are able to put on your glasses of concentration, you will be surprised at the variety of changes taking place in what would appear to be a stagnant and uninteresting spot of pain. The deeper the concentration, the deeper your understanding of pain. You will be more and more enthralled the more clearly you can see that these painful sensations are in a constant state of flux, from one sensation to another, changing, diminishing, growing stronger, fluctuating and dancing. Concentration and mindfulness will deepen and sharpen. At times when the show becomes utterly fascinating, there is a sudden and unexpected end to it, as though the curtain is dropped and the pain just disappears miraculously.

One who is unable to arouse enough courage or energy to look at pain will never understand the potential that lies in it. We have to develop courage of mind, heroic effort, to look at pain. Let's learn not to run from pain, but rather to go right in.

When pain arises, the first strategy is to send your attention straight toward it, right to the center of it. You try to penetrate its core. Seeing pain as pain, note it persistently, trying to get under its surface so that you do not react.

Perhaps you try very hard, but you still become fatigued. Pain can exhaust the mind. If you cannot maintain a reasonable level of energy, mindfulness and

concentration, it is time to gracefully withdraw. The second strategy for dealing with pain is to play with it. You go into it and then you relax a bit. You keep your attention on the pain, but you loosen the intensity of mindfulness and concentration. This gives your mind a rest. Then you go in again as closely as you can; and if you are not successful you retreat again. You go in and out, back and forth, two or three times.

If the pain is still strong and you find your mind be coming tight and constricted despite these tactics, it is time for a graceful surrender. This does not mean shifting your physical position just yet. It means shifting the position of your mindfulness. Completely ignore the pain and put your mind on the rising and falling or whatever primary object you are using. Try to concentrate so strongly on this that the pain is blocked out of your awareness.

Healing Body and Mind

We must try to overcome any timidity of mind. Only if you have the strength of mind of a hero will you be able to overcome pain by understanding it for what it really is. In meditation many kinds of unbearable physical sensations can arise. Nearly all yogis see clearly the discomfort that has always existed in their bodies, but magnified by concentration. During intensive practice pain also frequently resurfaces from old wounds, childhood mishaps, or chronic illnesses of the past. A current or recent illness can suddenly get worse. If these last two happen to you, you can say that Lady Luck is on your side. You have the chance to overcome an illness or chronic pain through your own heroic effort, without taking a drop of medicine. Many yogis have totally overcome and transcended their health problems through meditation practice alone.

About fifteen years ago there was a man who had been suffering from gastric troubles for many years. When he went to his checkup, the doctor said he had a tumor and needed surgery. The man was afraid that the operation would be unsuccessful and he might die.

So he decided to play it safe in case he did die. "I had better go meditate," he said to himself. He came to practice under my guidance. Soon he began to feel a lot of pain. At first it was not bad, but as he made progress in practice and reached the level of insight connected with pain, he had a severe, unbearable, torturous attack. He told me about it and I said, "Of course you are free to go home to see your doctor. However, why don't you stay a few more days?"

He thought about it and decided there still was no guarantee he would survive the operation. So he decided to stay and meditate. He took a teaspoon of medicine every two hours. At times the pain got the better of him; at times he overcame the pain. It was a long battle, with losses on both sides. But this man had enormous courage.

During one sitting the pain was so excruciating that his whole body shook and his clothes were soaked in sweat. The tumor in his stomach was getting harder and harder, more and more constricted. Suddenly his idea of his stomach disappeared as he was looking at it. Now there was just his consciousness and a painful object. It was very painful but it was very interesting. He kept on watching and there was just the noting mind and the pain, which got more and more excruciating.

Then there was a big explosion like a bomb. The yogi said he could even hear a loud sound. After that it was all over. He got up from his sitting drenched in sweat. He touched his belly, but in the place where his tumor once protruded, there was nothing. He was completely cured. Moreover, he had completed his meditation practice, having had an insight into nibbana.

Soon afterwards this man left the center and I asked him to let me know what the doctor said about the gastric problem. The doctor was shocked to see that the tumor was gone. The man could forget the strict diet he had followed for twenty years, and to this day he is alive and in good health. Even the doctor became a vipassana yogi!

I have come across innumerable people who have recovered from chronic headaches, heart trouble, tuberculosis, even cancer and severe injuries sustained at an early age. Some of them had been declared incurable by doctors. All of these people had to go through tremendous pain. But they exercised enormous perseverance and courageous effort, and they healed themselves. More important, many also came to understand far more deeply the truth about reality by observing pain with tenacious courage and then breaking through to insight.

You should not be discouraged by painful sensations. Rather, have faith and patience. Persevere until you understand your own true nature.

NINE: UNWAVERING COMMITMENT

The ninth and last factor leading to the development of the controlling faculties is the quality of mind that keeps you walking straight to the end of the path without becoming side-tracked, without giving up your task.

What is your objective in practicing meditation? Why do you undergo the threefold training of sila, samadhi and panna? It is important to appreciate the goal of meditation practice. It is even more important to be honest with yourself, so that you can know the extent of your commitment to that goal.

Good Deeds and Our Highest Potential

Let us reflect on sila. Having this amazing opportunity to be born on this planet as human beings, understanding that our wondrous existence in this world comes about as a result of good deeds, we should endeavor to live up to the highest potential of humanity. The positive connotations of the word "humanity" are great loving-kindness and compassion. Would it not be proper for every human being on this planet to aspire to perfect these qualities? If one is able to cultivate a mind filled with compassion and loving-kindness, it is easy to live in a harmonious and wholesome way. Morality is based on consideration for the feelings of all beings, others as well as oneself. One behaves in a moral way not only to be harmless toward others, but also to prevent one's own future sorrow. We all should avoid actions that will lead to unfavorable consequences, and walk the path of wholesome actions, which can free us forever from states of misery.

Kamma is our only true property. It will be very helpful if you can take this view as a basic foundation for your behavior, for your practice, for your life as a whole. Whether good or bad, kamma follows us everywhere, in this life and the next. If we perform skilful, harmonious actions, we will be held in high esteem in this very life. Wise persons will praise us and hold us in affection, and we will also be able to look forward to good circumstances in our future lives, until we attain final nibbana.

Committing bad or unskilful actions brings about dishonour and notoriety even in this life. Wise people will blame us and look down upon us. Nor in the future will we be able to escape the consequences of our deeds.

In its powerful potential to bring good and bad results, kamma can be compared to food. Some foods are suitable and healthy, while others are poisonous to the body. If we understand which foods are nutritious, eating them at the proper time and in proper amounts, we can enjoy a long and healthy life. If, on the other hand, we are tempted by foods which are unhealthy and poisonous, we must suffer the consequences. We may fall sick and suffer a great deal. We may even die.

Beautiful Acts

Practicing dana or generosity can lessen the greed that arises in the heart. The five basic sila precepts help control the emotions and very gross defilements of greed and hatred. Observing the precepts, the mind is controlled to the extent that it does not manifest through the body and perhaps not even through speech.

If you can be perfect in precepts, you may appear to be a very holy person, but inside you may still be tortured by eruptions of impatience, hatred, covetousness and scheming. Therefore, the next step is bhavana; which means in

Pali; the cultivation of exceptionally wholesome mental states." The first part of bhavana is to prevent unwholesome states from arising. The second part is the development of wisdom in the absence of these states.

Blissful Concentration and its Flaws

Samatha bhavana or concentration meditation, has the power to make the mind calm and tranquil and to pull it far away from the kilesas. It suppresses the kilesas, making it impossible for them to attack. Samatha bhavana is not unique to Buddhism. It can be found in many other religious systems, particularly in Hindu practices. It is a commendable undertaking in which the practitioner achieves purity of mind during the time he or she is absorbed in the object of meditation. Profound bliss, happiness and tranquillity are achieved. At times even psychic powers can be cultivated through these states. However, success in samatha bhavana does not at all mean that one gains an insight into the true nature of reality in terms of mind and matter. The kilesas have been suppressed but not uprooted; the mind has not yet penetrated the true nature of reality. Thus, practitioners are not freed from the net of samsara, and may even fall into states of misery in the future. One can attain a great deal through concentration and yet still be a loser.

After the Buddha's supreme enlightenment he spent forty-nine days in Bodh Gaya enjoying the bliss of his liberation. Then he started to think about how he could communicate this profound and subtle truth to other beings. He looked around and saw that most of the world was covered by a thick layer of dust, of kilesas. People were wallowing in deepest darkness. The immensity of his task dawned on him.

Then it occurred to him that there were two-people who would be quite receptive to his teaching, whose minds were quite pure and clear of the kilesas. In fact, they were two of his former teachers, the hermits Alara the Kalama and Uddaka the Ramaputta. Each of them had a large number of followers due to their attainments in concentration. The Buddha had mastered each of their teachings in turn, but had realized that he was seeking something beyond what they taught.

Yet both of these hermits' minds were very pure. Alara the Kalama had mastered the seventh level of concentration, and Uddaka the Ramaputta the eighth, or highest, level of absorption. The kilesas were kept far from them, even during the times when they were not actually practicing their absorptions. The Buddha felt certain they would become completely enlightened if only he would speak a few significant words of Dhamma to them.

Even as the Buddha considered in this way, an invisible *deva,* a being from a celestial realm, announced to him that both of the hermits had died. Alara the Kalama had passed away seven days before, and Uddaka the Ramaputta only the

previous night. Both had been reborn in the formless world of the brahmas, where mind exists but matter does not. Therefore the hermits no longer had ears for hearing nor eyes for seeing. It was impossible for them to see the Buddha or to listen to the Dhamma; and, since meeting with a teacher and listening to the Dhamma are the only two ways to discover the right way of practice, the two hermits had missed their chance to become fully enlightened.

The Buddha was moved. 'They have suffered a great loss," he said.

Liberating Intuition

What exactly is missing from concentration meditation? It simply cannot bring the understanding of truth. For this we need Vipassana meditation. Only intuitive insight into the true nature of mind and matter can free one from the concept of ego, of a person, of self or "I." Without this insight which comes about through the process of bare awareness, one cannot be free from these concepts.

Only an intuitive understanding of the mechanism of cause and effect — that is, seeing the link of recurrence of mind and matter — can free one from the delusion that things happen without a cause. Only by seeing the rapid arising and disappearance of phenomena can one be released from the delusion that things are permanent, solid and continuous. Only by experiencing suffering in the same intuitive way can one deeply learn that samsaric existence is not worth clinging to. Only the knowledge that mind and matter just flow by according to their own natural laws with no one, and nothing, behind them, can impress upon one's mind that there is no *atta,* or self essence.

Unless you go through the various levels of insight and eventually realize nibbana, you will not understand true happiness. With nibbana as the ultimate goal of your practice, you should try to maintain a high level of energy, not stopping or surrendering, never retreating until you reach your final destination.

First you will make the effort needed to establish your meditation practice. You focus your mind on the primary object of meditation, and you return to this object again and again. You set up a routine of sitting and walking practice. This is called "Launching Energy;" it puts you on the path and gets you moving forward.

Even if obstacles arise, you will stick with your practice, overcoming all obstacles with perseverance. If you are bored and lethargic, you summon up ardent energy. If you feel pain, you overcome the timid mind that prefers to withdraw and is unwilling to face what is happening. This is called "Liberating Energy," the energy necessary to liberate you from indolence. You will not retreat. You know you will just keep walking until you reach your goal.

After that, when you have overcome the intermediate difficulties and perhaps have found yourself in a smooth and subtle space, you will not become complacent. You will go into the next gear, putting in the effort to lift your mind higher and higher. This is an effort which neither decreases nor stagnates, but is in constant progress. This is called "Progressive Effort," and it leads to the goal you desire.

Therefore, the ninth factor conducive to sharpening the controlling faculties actually means applying successive levels of energy so that you neither stop nor hesitate, surrender nor retreat, until you reach your final goal and destination.

As you go along in this way, making use of all of the nine qualities of mind described above, the five controlling faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom will sharpen and deepen. Eventually they will take over your mind and lead you on to freedom.

I hope you can examine your own practice. If you see that it is lacking in some element, make use of the above information to your own benefit.

Please walk straight on until you reach your desired

3.The Ten Armies of Mara

Meditation can be seen as a war between wholesome and unwholesome mental states. On the unwholesome side are the forces of the kilesas, also known as "The Ten Armies of Mara." In Pali, Mara means killer. He is the personification of the force that kills virtue and also kills existence. His armies are poised to attack all yogis; they even tried to overcome the Buddha on the night of his enlightenment.

Here are the lines the Buddha addressed to Mara, as recorded in the *Sutta Nipata:*

Sensual pleasures are your first army,

Discontent your second is called.

Your third is hunger and thirst,

The fourth is called craving.

Sloth and torpor are your fifth,

The sixth is called fear,

Your seventh is doubt,

Conceit and ingratitude are your eighth,

Gain, renown, honor and whatever fame is falsely received (are the ninth),

And whoever both extols himself and

disparages others (has fallen victim to the tenth).

That is your army, Namuci [Mara],

the striking force of darkness.

One who is not a hero cannot conquer it, but having conquered it, one obtains happiness.

To overcome the forces of darkness in our own minds, we have the wholesome power of *satipatthana vipassana* meditation, which gives us the sword of mindfulness, as well as strategies for attack and defense.

In the Buddha's case, we know who won the victory. Now, which side will win over you?

FIRST ARMY: SENSE PLEASURE

Sense pleasure is the First Army of Mara. Due to previous good actions in sensual or material realms, we find ourselves reborn in this world. Here, as in other sensual spheres, beings are faced with a wide assortment of appealing sense objects. Sweet sounds, rich smells, beautiful ideas, and other delightful objects touch all our six sense doors. As a natural result of encountering these objects, desire arises. Pleasant objects and desire are the two bases of sense

pleasure.

Our attachments to family, property, business and friends also constitute the First Army. Normally for a sentient being, this army is very difficult to overcome. Some humans fight it by becoming monks and nuns, leaving behind their families and all that they cling to. Yogis on retreat leave behind their family and occupation temporarily in order to combat the force of attachment which ties us to the six kinds of sense objects.

Anytime you practice meditation, especially in a retreat, you leave behind a large number of pleasant things. Even with this narrowing in range, though, you still find that some parts of your environment are more desirable than others. At this time it is useful to recognize that you are dealing with Mara, the enemy of your freedom.

SECOND ARMY: DISSATISFACTION

The Second Army of Mara is dissatisfaction with the holy life, with the meditation practice in particular. On a retreat, you may find yourself dissatisfied and bored: with the hardness or the height of your cushion, with the food you are given, with any of the elements of your life during the time of practice. Some issue crops up and, as a result, you cannot quite immerse yourself in the delight of meditation. You may begin to feel that this is actually the fault of the practice.

To combat this discontent, you must become an *abhirati,* a person who is delighted in and devoted to the Dhamma. Having found and implemented the correct method of practice, you begin to overcome the hindrances. Rapture, joy and comfort will arise naturally from your concentrated mind. At this time you realize that the delight of the Dhamma is far superior to sense pleasures. This is the attitude of an abhirati. However, if you are not thorough and careful in your practice, you will not find this subtle and wonderful taste of the Dhamma, and any difficulty in your practice will cause aversion to arise in you. Then Mara will be victorious.

The overcoming of difficulty in vipassana practice is, again, like warfare. The yogi will use an offensive, defensive or a guerrilla style of combat depending on his or her abilities. If he or she is a strong fighter, the yogi will advance. If weak, he or she may withdraw temporarily, but not in a helter-

skelter fashion, reeling and running in disorder. Rather, the withdrawal will be strategic, planned and executed with the aim of gathering strength to win the battle at last.

Sometimes discontent with the environmental or other supports of meditation practice is not entirely Mara's fault - not entirely due to the wanderings of a greedy mind. Nonetheless, pervasive discontent may interfere with meditative progress. To allow for meditation, certain necessities of life must be available. Yogis must have proper shelter and meals, as well as sundry other help. With these requirements met they can proceed wholeheartedly to practice meditation. The need for a suitable environment is the fourth of nine causes for development of the controlling faculties, and was discussed at length in the preceding chapter. If you find a deficiency in your environment that you are certain is hindering your meditation, it is all right to take reasonable steps to correct it. Of course, you should be honest with yourself and others; make sure that you are not merely succumbing to Mara's Second Army.

THIRD ARMY: HUNGER AND THIRST

Is food the problem? Perhaps a yogi has to overcome desire and dissatisfaction, only to be attacked again by Mara's Third Army, hunger and thirst. In the days of old and even now, Buddhist monks and nuns have depended for their food on the generosity of lay people. The normal practice for a monk is to go for an alms round every day in the community or village that supports him. Sometimes a monk may live in a secluded area and take all his support from a small group of families. One day his needs will be well taken care of, another day not. The same goes for lay yogis. At a retreat, the food is not quite like home. You do not get the sweet things you are fond of; or the sour, salty and rich foods you are accustomed to. Agitated by missing such tastes, you cannot concentrate and thus are unable to see the Dhamma.

In the world also, one can spend a lot of money in a restaurant and then not like the dish. Rarely, in fact do human beings get everything precisely as they like. They may hunger and thirst not only for food, but also for clothing, entertainment, and activities either reassuringly familiar, or exotically exciting. This notion of hunger and thirst relates to the entire range of needs and requirements.

If you are easily contented, adopting an attitude of being grateful for

whatever you receive, Mara's Third Army will not bother you very much. One cannot always do every thing one wishes to do, but it is possible to try to remain within what is beneficial and appropriate. If you concentrate your energy on furthering your meditation practice, you will be able to taste the real taste of the Dhamma, which is incomparably satisfying. At such a time, the Third Army of Mara will seem an army of toy soldiers to you.

Otherwise it is hard to adjust to hunger and thirst. They are uncomfortable feelings which no one really welcomes.

When they strike, if there is no mindfulness, the mind inevitably begins to scheme. You come up with fantastic justifications for getting what you want — for the sake of your practice! Your mental health! To aid your digestion! Then you begin moving around to get the things you desire. Your body gets involved in satisfying your craving.

FOURTH ARMY: CRAVING

Craving is the Fourth Army of Mara. At times a monk's bowl may not be quite full at the end of his normal alms round, or some of the things most suitable for his diet have not yet appeared in it. Instead of going home to the monastery, he may decide to continue his alms round. Here is a new route, as yet untried — on it he might get the tidbit he desires. New routes like this can grow quite long.

Whether one is a monk or not one might be familiar with this pattern. First comes craving, then planning, then moving about to materialize these schemes. This whole process can be very exhausting to mind and body.

FIFTH ARMY: SLOTH AND TORPOR

Thus, the Fifth Army of Mara marches in. It is none other than sloth and torpor, drowsiness. The difficulties caused by sloth and torpor are worth dwelling on, for they are surprisingly great. Torpor is the usual translation of the

Pali word *thina,* which actually means a weak mind, a shrunken and withered, viscous and slimy mind, unable to grasp the meditation object firmly.

As thina makes the mind weak, it automatically brings on weakness of body. The sluggish mind cannot keep your sitting posture erect and firm. Walking meditation becomes a real drag, so to speak. The presence of thina means that *atapa,* the fiery aspect of energy, is absent. The mind be comes stiff and hard; it loses its active sharpness.

Even if a yogi has good energy to begin with, sloth can envelop him or her so that an additional burst of energy will be required to burn it away. All the positive forces of mind are at least partially blocked. The wholesome factors of energy and mindfulness, aim and contact, are enveloped in the shroud of weakness; their functions are retarded. This situation as a whole is spoken of as *Thina middha,* thina being the mental factor of torpor, and middha referring to the condition of the consciousness as a whole when the factor of torpor is present.

In one's practical experience, it is not worthwhile to try to distinguish between the two components of thina and middha. The general state of mind is familiar enough. Like imprisonment in a tiny cell, sloth is a restricted state in which no wholesome factor is free to carry on its proper activity. This obstruction of wholesome factors is why sloth and torpor together are called a hindrance. Eventually Mara's Fifth Army can bring one's practice to a complete standstill. A twitching sensation comes to the eyelids, the head suddenly nods forward... How can we overcome this noxious state? Once when the Venerable Maha Moggallana, one of the Buddha's two chief disciples, was meditating in the forest, thina middha arose. His mind shrank and withered, as unworkable as a piece of butter that hardens in the cold. At this point the Lord Buddha looked into the Venerable Maha Moggalana's mind. Seeing his plight, he approached and said, "My son Maha Moggallana, are you drowsy, are you sleepy, are you nodding?"

The elder replied, "Yes, Lord, I am nodding." He was frank and candid in his reply. the Buddha said, "Listen, my son, I will now teach you eight techniques of overcoming sloth and torpor."

Eight Ways to Stay Awake

The first is to change one's attitude. When torpor attacks, one may be tempted to surrender to thoughts like, "I'm so sleepy. It's not doing me any good just to sit here in a daze. May be I'll lie down for a minute and gather my energy." As long as you entertain such thoughts, the mental state of sloth and torpor will be encouraged to remain.

If, on the other hand, one states decisively, "I'll sit through this sloth and

torpor, and if it recurs I still won't give in to it," this is what the Buddha meant by changing one's attitude. Such determination sets the stage for overcoming the Fifth Army of Mara.

Another occasion to change one's attitude is when meditation practice becomes quite easy and smooth. There comes a point where you have more or less mastered following the rise and fall of the abdomen, and not much effort is needed to observe it well. It is quite natural to relax, sit back and watch the movement very coolly. Due to this relaxation of effort, sloth and torpor easily creep in. If this happens, you should either try to deepen your mindfulness, looking more carefully into the rise and fall, or else increase the number of objects of meditation.

There is a specific technique for adding mow objects. It requires greater effort than simply watching the abdomen, and thus it has a revivifying effect. The mental labels to use are, "rising, falling, sitting, touching? When you note "sitting," you shift your awareness to the sensations of the entire body in the sitting posture. Noting "touching," you focus on the touch sensations at one or more small areas, about the size of a quarter. The buttocks arc convenient. During this "touching" note you should always return to the same chosen areas, even it you cannot always find sensations there. The heavier the state of sloth, the more touch points you should include, up to a maximum of six or so. When you have run through the course of touch points, return attention to your abdomen and repeat the series of notes from the beginning. This change of strategy can be quite effective; but it is not infallible.

The second antidote In drowsiness is to reflect on inspiring passages you remember or have learned by heart, trying to fathom their deepest meanings. Perhaps you have lain awake at night pondering the meaning of some event. If so, you understand the function of the Buddha's second antidote to sloth and torpor. In Buddhist psychology, when thinking is analyzed in terms of its components, one component is the mental factor of *vitakka* or aim. This mental factor has the capacity to open and refresh the mind, and is the specific antidote to sloth and torpor.

The third strategy for dealing with sloth is to recite those same passages aloud. If you are meditating in a group, it goes without saying that you should recite only loud enough for your own benefit.

Resort to more drastic measures if your mind still has not perked up. Pull on your ears; rub your hands, arms, legs and face. This stimulates the circulation and so freshens you up a bit.

If drowsiness persists, get up mindfully and wash your face. You could put in some eye-drops to refresh yourself.

If this strategy fails, you are advised to look at a lighted object, such as the moon or an electric bulb; this should lighten up your mind. Clarity of mind is a kind of light. With it, you can make a renewed attempt to look clearly at the rising and falling from beginning to end. If none of these techniques work, then you should try some brisk walking meditation with mindfulness. Finally, a graceful surrender would be to go to bed. If sloth and torpor are persistent over a long period, constipation could be responsible; if this is the case, consider measures to gently clear the bowels.

SIXTH ARMY: FEAR

The Sixth Army of Mara is fear and cowardliness. It easily attacks yogis who practice in a remote place, especially if the level of ardent effort is low after an attack of sloth and torpor. Courageous effort drives out fear. So does a clear perception of the Dhamma which comes as a result of effort, mindfulness and concentration. The Dhamma is the greatest protection available on earth: faith in, and practice of the Dhamma are therefore the greatest medicines for fear. Practicing morality ensures that one's future circumstances will be wholesome and pleasant; practicing concentration means that one suffers less from mental distress; and practicing wisdom leads toward nibbana, where all fear and danger have been surpassed. Practicing the Dhamma, you truly care for yourself, protect yourself, and act as your own best friend.

Ordinary fear is the sinking form of anger. You cannot face the problem, so you show no reaction outwardly and wait for the opportunity to run away. But if you can face your problems directly, with an open and relaxed mind, fear will not arise. On a meditation retreat, yogis who have lost touch with the Dhamma feel fear and lack of confidence in relating to other yogis and their teacher. For example, some yogis are severely attacked by sloth and torpor. Such people have been known to sleep through five hour-long sittings in a row. They may have only a few minutes of clear awareness in an entire day. Such yogis tend to feel inferior, shy and embarrassed, especially if they begin to compare their own practice to that of other yogis who seem to be in deep samadhi all the time. At times in Burma, torpid yogis slip away for a couple of days and miss their interviews. A few slip all the way home! They are like school children who have not done their homework. If such yogis would apply courageous effort, their awareness would become hot like the sun, burning off the clouds of sleepiness. Then they could face their teachers boldly, ready to report what they have seen for themselves in the light created by Dhamma practice.

No matter what problem you may encounter in your meditation practice, try

to have the courage and honesty to report it to your teacher. Sometimes yogis may feel that their practice is falling apart, when actually it is going fine. A teacher who is trustworthy and well-qualified can help you to overcome such insecurities, and you can continue on the path of Dhamma with energy, faith and confidence.

SEVENTH ARMY: DOUBT

Sloth and torpor is only one reason why yogis may begin to doubt their own capacities. Doubt is the Seventh Army of Mara, dreadful and fearsome. When a yogi begins to slip in his or her practice, he or she will probably begin to lose self-confidence. Pondering the situation does not usually lead to improvement. Instead, doubt arises and slowly spreads: first as self-doubt, then as doubt of the method of practice. It may even extend to becoming doubt of the teacher. Is the teacher competent to understand this situation? Perhaps this yogi is a special case and needs a special new set of instructions. The experiences narrated by fellow yogis must be imaginary. Every conceivable aspect of practice becomes dubious.

The Pali word for this Seventh Army is *vicikiccha,* which means more than simple doubt. It is the exhaustion of mind that comes about through conjecture. A yogi attacked by sloth and torpor, for example, will not be able to muster the continuous attention that fosters intuitive vipassana insight. If such a yogi were mindful, he or she might experience mind and matter directly, and see that these two are connected by cause and effect. If no actual observation is made, however, the true nature of mind and matter will remain obscure. One simply cannot understand what one hasn't yet seen. Now this unmindful yogi begins to intellectualize and reason: "I wonder what mind and matter are composed of, what their relationship is," Unfortunately, he or she can only interpret experiences based on a very immature depth of knowledge, mixed up with fantasy. This is an explosive mixture. Since the mind is unable to penetrate into the truth, agitation arises, and then perplexity, indecisiveness, which is another aspect of vicikiccha. Excessive reasoning is exhausting.

Immaturity of insight prevents a yogi from reaching a firm and convinced position. Instead, his or her mind is condemned to run about among various options. Remembering all the meditative techniques he or she has heard of, a yogi might try a bit from here and a bit from there. This person falls into a great pot of chop suey, perhaps to drown. Vicikiccha can be a terrible obstacle in practice. The proximate cause of doubting conjecture is lack of proper attention, an improper adjustment of the mind in its search for truth. Proper attention, then,

is the most direct cure for doubt. If you look correctly and in the right place, you will see what you are looking for: the true nature of things. Having seen this for yourself, you will have no more doubt about it.

To create the proper conditions for wise attention, it is important to have a teacher who can put you on the path leading to truth and wisdom. The Buddha himself said that one who is intent on finding the truth should seek out a reliable and competent teacher. If you cannot find a good teacher and follow his or her instructions, then you must turn to the plethora of meditation literature availably today. Please be cautious, especially if you are an avid reader. If you gain a general knowledge of many techniques and then try to put them all together, you will probably end up disappointed, and even more doubtful than when you started. Some of the techniques may even be good ones, but since you will not have practiced them with proper thoroughness, they will not work and you will feel skeptical of them. Thus you will have robed yourself of the opportunity to experience the very real benefits of meditation practice. If one cannot practice properly, one cannot gain personal, intuitive, real understanding of the nature of phenomena. Not only will doubt increase, but the mind will become very hard and stiff, attacked by *kodha,* aversion and associated mental status. Frustration and resistance might he among them.

The Thorny Mind

Kodha makes the mind hard and rigid as a thorn. Under its influence, a yogi is said to be pricked by the mind, like a traveler thrashing through a bramble thicket, suffering at every step. Since *kodha* is a great impediment in many yogis' meditation practice, I will deal with it in some detail in hopes that readers can learn to overcome it. In general, it results from two kinds of mental states: firstly from doubt, and secondly from what are known as "the mental fetters."

There are five kinds of doubt which load to the thorny mind. A yogi is pricked by doubt regarding the Buddha, the great master who showed the path to enlightenment. One doubts the Dhamma, the path that leads to liberation; and the sangha, the noble ones who have uprooted some or all of the kilesas. Next come doubts of oneself, of one's own morality and method of practice. Last is doubt of fellow yogis, including one's teacher. When so many doubts are present, the yogi is filled with anger and resistance: his or her mind becomes thorny indeed, he or she will probably feel quite unwilling actually to practice this meditation, seeing it as dubious and unreliable.

All is not lost, however. Wisdom and knowledge are medicine (or this state of vicikiccha. One form of knowledge is reasoning. Often persuasive words can coax a doubting yogi from the brambles: a teacher's reasoning, or an inspiring and well-constructed discourse. Returning to the clear path of direct observation, such yogis breathe great sighs of relief and gratitude. Now they have the chance to gain personal insight into the true nature of reality. If they do attain insight,

then a higher level of wisdom becomes their medicine for the thorny mind.

Failure to return to the path, however, may allow doubt to reach its incurable stage.

The Five Mental Fetters

The thorny mind arises not only from doubt, but also from another set of causes known as the five mental fetters. When these mental letters are present, the mind suffers from hard and prickling states of aversion, frustration and resistance. But these fetters can be overcome. Vipassana meditation clears them automatically from the mind. If they do manage to intrude upon one's practice, identifying them is the first step toward recovering a broad and flexible mental state.

The first mental fetter is to be chained to the various objects of the senses. Desiring only pleasant objects, one will be dissatisfied with what is really occurring in the present moment. The primary object, the rising and falling of the abdomen, may seem inadequate and uninteresting in comparison with one's fantasies. If this dissatisfaction occurs, one's meditative development will be undermined.

The second fetter is over-attachment to one's own body, sometimes spoken of as excessive self-love. A variation is the projection of attachment and possessiveness onto another person and his or her body. This is the third fetter, and it is such a common situation that I hardly need elaborate.

Excessive sell-love can be a significant hindrance in the course of practice. When one sits for extended periods, unpleasant sensations invariably arise, some of them rather intense. You may begin to wonder about your poor legs. Will you ever walk again? You may decide to open your eyes and stretch. At this point, continuity of attention usually breaks apart; momentum is lost. Tender consideration for one's own body can sometimes supplant the courage we need to probe into the actual nature of pain.

Personal appearance is another area where this second fetter can arise. Some human beings depend on stylish clothes and makeup to feel happy. If ever they lose access to these external supports (perhaps on a retreat where makeup and flamboyant fashions are inappropriate distractions), these people feel as if something is missing, and worry can interfere with their progress. The fourth fetter of mind is to be chained to food. Some people like to eat large amounts, others have many whims and preferences. People whose first concern is the satisfaction of their bellies tend to find greater bliss in snoozing than in practicing mindfulness. A few yogis have the opposite problem, worrying constantly about gaining weight. They, too, are chained to what they eat.

The fifth fetter of mind is to practice with the goal of gaining rebirth in a deva world. Besides effectively basing one's practice on craving for sensual pleasures, this is also to set one's sights much too low. For information on the disadvantages of deva life, see the last chapter of this book, "Chariot to Nibbana."

By diligent practice one overcomes these five fetters. By the same means, (one overcomes doubt and the anger that follows it. Relieved from thorny discomfort, the mind be comes crystal clear and bright. This bright mind is happy to make the preliminary effort that sets your feet on the path of practice, the steady effort that moves you along into deeper meditation, and the culminating effort that brings liberation at the higher stages of practice. This three fold effort — actually directed toward keeping the mind alert and observant — is the best and most natural defense strategy against Mara's Seventh Army of doubt. Only when the mind slips from the object, as it will in times of slackening effort, do the conjectures and equivocations of doubt have a chance to set in.

Faith Clarifies the Mind

The quality of faith, or *saddha,* also has the power to clarify the mind and clear away clouds of doubt or aversion. Imagine a pail of murky river water, full of sediment. Some chemical substances, such as alum, have the power to make suspended particles settle quickly, leaving clear water behind. Faith works just like this. It settles impurities, and brings a sparkling clarity to the mind.

A yogi ignorant of the virtues of the Triple Gem — the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha — will doubt its value as well as that of the meditation practice, and will be overcome by the Seventh Army of Mara. Such a yogi's mind is like a bucket of murky river water. But informed of these virtues through reading, discussions and Dhamma talks, a yogi can gradually settle doubts and begin to arouse faith.

With faith comes the desire to meditate, the willingness to exert energy in order to reach the goal. Strong faith is the foundation of sincerity and commitment. Sincerity of practice and commitment to the Dhamma will of course lead to the development of effort, mindfulness and concentration. Then wisdom will unfold in the form of the various stages of vipassana insight.

When circumstances and conditions are right in meditation, wisdom unfolds quite naturally of itself. Wisdom, or insight, occurs when one sees the specific and common characteristics of mental and physical phenomena. Individual characteristics mean the specific traits of mind and matter as experienced directly within you. These are color, shape, taste, smell, loudness, hardness or softness, temperature, movement, and different states of mind. Common characteristics are general to all the manifestations of mind and matter. Objects

may differ greatly from one another in terms of individual essence or individual characteristics, yet all are united by the universal traits of impermanence, suffering and absence of an abiding self or essence.

Both these types of characteristics, specific and common, will be understood clearly and unquestionably through the insight that arises naturally out of bare awareness. One attribute of this wisdom or insight is the quality of brightness. It lightens one's field of awareness. Wisdom is like a floodlight breaking into pitch darkness, revealing what was invisible up to now — the specific and common qualities of all objects and mental slates. By wisdom's light, you will see these aspects of any activity you are involved in, be it seeing, smelling, tasting, touching, feeling through the body, or thinking.

The behavioral aspect of wisdom is nonconfusion. When insight is present, the mind is no longer confused by mistaken concepts about, or delusive perceptions of, mind and matter.

Seeing clearly, bright and unconfused, the mind begins to fill with a new kind of faith, known as verified faith. Verified faith is neither blind nor unfounded. It comes directly from personal experience of reality. One might compare it to the faith that raindrops will get us wet. The scriptures formally characterize this kind of faith as a decision based on direct personal experience. Thus, we see a very close association between faith and wisdom.

Verified faith does not arise because you hear statements you find plausible. No comparative study, scholastic research nor abstract reasoning can bring it. Nor is it shoved down your throat by some sayadaw, roshi, rinpoche, or spiritual group. Your own direct, personal, intuitive experience brings about this firm and durable kind of faith.

The most important way to develop and realize verified faith is practice in conformity with instructions from the scriptures. The satipatthana method of meditation is some times viewed as narrow and oversimplified. It may appear so from the outside, but when wisdom begins to unfold during deep practice, personal experience shatters this myth of narrowness. Vipassana brings a wisdom that is far from narrow. It is panoramic and expansive.

In the presence of faith one can spontaneously notice that the mind has become crystal clear and is free from disturbances and pollution. At this time, too, the mind fills with peace and clarity. The function of verified faith is to bring together the five controlling faculties discussed in the last chapter — faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom — and to clarify them. They become alert and effective, and their active properties will be more efficiently deployed to bring about a calm, powerful, incisive meditative state — one which is bound to be successful in overcoming not only the Seventh, but all the other

nine armies of Mara as well.

Four Powers which Motivate Successful Practice

In practice as much as in worldly endeavors, a vigorous and strong-minded person is quite sure of accomplishing whatever she or he desires. Vigor and strength of mind are only two of the four powers which motivate a successful practice. *Chanda* is willingness, the first power. *Viriya* is energy, or vigor, the second. Strength of mind is third, and wisdom or knowledge is the fourth. If these four factors provide the driving force for practice, one's meditation will unfold whether one has any desire to gain results from it or not. One can even reach nibbana in this way.

The Buddha gave a rather homely example which illustrates just how the results of meditation are attained. If mother hen lays an egg with a sincere wish for it to hatch, but then runs off and leaves the egg exposed to nature's elements, the egg will soon rot. If, on the other hand, mother hen is conscientious in her duties toward the egg, sitting on it for long periods every day, the warmth of her body will keep the egg from rotting and will also permit the chick within to grow. Sitting on the egg is mother hen's most important duty. She must do this in the proper way, with her wings slightly spread out to protect the nest from rain. She must also take care not to sit heavily and crack her egg. If she sits in proper style and for sufficient time, the egg will naturally receive the warmth it needs to hatch. Inside the shell, an embryo develops beak and claws. Day by day the shell grows thinner. During mother hen's brief excursions from the nest, the chick inside may see a light that slowly brightens. After three weeks or so, a healthy yellow chick pecks its way out of its claustrophobic space. This result happens regardless of whether the hen foresaw the outcome. All she did was sit on the egg with sufficient regularity.

Mother hens are very dedicated and committed to their task. At times they would rather be hungry and thirsty than get up from the egg. If they do have to get up, they go about their errands as efficiently as possible and then return to their sitting practice.

I am not recommending that you skip meals, or stop drinking liquids, or cease going to the bathroom. I would simply like you to be inspired by the hen's patience and persistence. Imagine if she became fickle and restless, sitting for a few minutes and then going out to do something else for a few minutes. Her egg would quickly rot, and the chick would lose its chance for life.

So, too, for the yogi. If during sitting meditation, you are prone to giving in to all those whims to scratch, to shift, to squirm, then the heat of energy will not be continuous enough to keep the mind fresh and free from attacks by the rotting influence of mental obscurations and difficulties such as the five mental fetters mentioned above: sense desire, attachment to our own bodies and to the bodies

of others, gluttony, and craving for future sensual pleasures as a result of meditation practice.

A yogi who tries to be mindful in each moment generates a persistent stream of energy, like the persistent heat of mother hen's body. This heat aspect of energy prevents the mind from rotting from its exposure to kilesa attacks, and it also permits insight to grow and mature through its developmental stages.

All five of the mental fetters arise in the absence of attention. If one is not careful when there is contact with a pleasurable sense object, the mind will be filled with craving and clinging — the first mental fetter. With mindfulness, however, sense desire is overcome. Similarly, if one can penetrate the true nature of the body, attachment to it disappears. Our infatuation with the bodies of others diminishes in turn. Thus the second and third mental fetters are broken. Close attention to the whole process of eating cuts through gluttony, the fourth mental fetter. If one carries out this whole practice with the aim of realizing nibbana, hankering after mundane pleasures one might obtain in the afterlife will also disappear — wishing for rebirth in subtle realms is the fifth fetter of mind. Thus, continuous mindfulness and energy overcome all five fetters. When these fetters are broken, we are no longer bound in a dark, constricted mental state. Our minds are freed to emerge into the light.

With continued effort, mindfulness and concentration, the mind slowly fills with the warmth of the Dhamma which keeps it fresh and scorches the kilesas. The Dhamma's fragrance penetrates throughout, and the shell of ignorance grows thinner and more translucent. Yogis begin to understand mind and matter and the conditionality of all things. Faith based on direct experience arises. They understand directly how mind and matter are inter related by a process of cause and effect, rather than being moved by the actions and decisions of an independent self. By inference, they realize that this same causal process existed in the past and will continue into the future. As practice deepens, one gains deep confidence, no longer doubting oneself and one's practice, other yogis or teachers. The mind is filled with gratitude for the Buddha, the Dhamma and the sangha.

Then one begins to see the appearing and disappearing of things, and realizes their impermanent nature, their suffering and lack of a permanent self. Upon the occurrence of such insights, ignorance of these aspects disappears.

Like the chick about to hatch, at this point you will see a lot of light coming through the shell. Awareness of objects moves ahead at a faster and faster pace; you will be filled with a sort of energy you have never experienced before, and great faith will arise.

If you continue to incubate your wisdom, you will be led forward to the experience of nibbana — *magga phala,* path and fruition consciousness. You

will emerge from the shell of darkness. Just like the chick who, filled with enthusiasm to find itself in the great world, runs about the sunny farmyard with its mother, so too will you be filled with happiness and bliss. Yogis who have experienced nibbana feel a unique, new-found happiness and bliss. Their faith, energy, mindfulness and concentration become particularly strong.

I hope you will take this analogy of mother hen into deep consideration. just as she hatches her chicks without hopes or desire, merely carrying out her duties in a conscientious way, so may you well incubate and hatch your practice.

May you not become a rotten egg.

Captain of My Own Ship

I have spent a lot of time here on doubt and related problems because I know they are quite serious, and I want to help you avoid them. I know personally how much suffering doubt can cause. When I was twenty-eight or twenty-nine years old I began to meditate under the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw, my predecessor and the head of the lineage of Mahasi Sasana Yeiktha, the meditation center in Rangoon. After about a week at the meditation center, I began to feel quite critical of my fellow meditators. Some monks who were supposed to be meditating were not perfect in their morality; they did not seem scrupulous or meticulous to me. The lay meditators, too, seemed to communicate and move about in an uncivilized, impolite manner. Doubt began to fill my mind. Even my teacher, one of Mahasi Sayadaw's assistants, came under the fire of my critical mind. This man never smiled and was sometimes abrupt and harsh. I felt that a meditation teacher should be filled with softness and solicitude.

A competent meditation teacher can make quite an educated guess about a yogi's situation, based on experience with many yogis as well as on scriptural study. The master who was teaching me was no exception. He saw my practice begin to regress. Guessing that a doubt attack was responsible, he gave me a very gentle and skillful scolding. Afterwards I went back to my room and did some soul-searching. I asked myself. "Why did I come here? To criticize others and test the teacher? No."

I realized that I had come to the center to get rid of as many as I could of the kilesas I had accumulated through my journey in samsara. I hoped to accomplish this goal by practicing the Dhamma of the Buddha in the meditative tradition of the center where I was. This reflection was a great clarification for me.

A simile popped into my mind. It was as if I had been on a sailboat. Out at sea I had been caught in a raging storm. Huge waves rose up and crashed down again on every side. Blown from left to right, up and down, I rocked helplessly in the mighty ocean. Around me other boats were in the same predicament.

Instead of managing my own boat, I had been barking orders at the other captains:

"Better put up the sails! Hey, you! Better take them down." If I had remained a busybody, I might well have found myself at the bottom of the ocean.

This is what I learned for myself. After that I worked very hard and entertained no more doubts in my mind. I even became a favorite of my teacher. I hope you can benefit from this experience of mine.

EIGHTH ARMY: CONCEIT AND INGRATITUDE

Having overcome doubt, the yogi begins to realize some aspects of the Dhamma. Unfortunately, the Eighth Army of Mara lies in wait, in the form of conceit and ingratitude. Conceit arises when yogis begin to experience joy, rapture, delight, and other interesting things in practice. At this point they may wonder whether their teacher has actually attained this wondrous stage yet, whether other yogis are practicing as hard as they are, and so forth.

Conceit most often happens at the stage of insight when yogis perceive the momentary arising and passing away of phenomena. It is a wonderful experience of being perfectly present, seeing how objects arise and pass away at the very moment when mindfulness alights on them. At this particular stage, a host of defilements can arise. They are specifically known as the *vipassana kilesas,* defilements of insight. Since these defilements can become a harmful obstacle, it is important for yogis to understand them clearly. The scriptures tell us that *mana* or conceit has the characteristic of bubbly energy, of a great zeal and enthusiasm arising in the mind. One overflows with energy and is filled with self-centered, self-glorifying thoughts like, "I'm so great, no one can compare with me."

A prominent aspect of conceit is stiffness and rigidity. One's mind feels stiff and bloated, like a python that has just swallowed some other creature. This aspect of mana is also reflected as tension in the body and posture. Its victims get big-headed and stiff-necked, and thus may find it difficult to bow respectfully to others.

Forgetting others' Help

Conceit is really a fearsome mental state. It destroys gratitude, making it difficult to acknowledge that one owes any kind of debt to another person. Forgetting the good deeds others have done for us in the past, one belittles them and denigrates their virtues. Not only that, but one also actively conceals the virtues of others so that no one will hold them in esteem. This attitude toward one's benefactors is the second aspect of conceit, rigidity being the first.

All of us have had benefactors in our lives, especially in childhood and younger days. Our parents, for example, gave us love, education and the necessities of life at a time when we were helpless. Our teachers gave us knowledge. Friends helped us when we got into trouble. Remembering our debts to those who have helped us, we feel humble and grateful, and we hope for a chance to help them in turn. It is precisely this gentle state that defeats Mara's Eighth Army.

Yet it is very common to find people who don't recognize the good that has been done for them in the past. Perhaps a lay person finds himself or herself in trouble, and a compassionate friend offers help. Thanks to this help, the person manages to improve his or her circumstances. Later, however, he or she may demonstrate no gratitude at all, may even turn and speak harshly to the erstwhile benefactor. "What have you ever done for me?" Such behavior is far from unknown in this world.

Even a monk may become arrogant, feeling he has reached fame and popularity as a teacher only through his own hard work. He forgets his preceptors and teachers, who may have helped him since his childhood days as a novice. They will have taught him the scriptures, provided him with the requisites of life, instructed him in meditation, given him advice, and admonished him when appropriate, so that he grew up to be a responsible, cultured, civilized young monk.

Come the age of independence, this monk may reveal great talent. He gives good Dhamma talks that are well received by the audience. People respect him, give him many presents and invite him to distant places to teach. Having reached a high station in life, the monk may become rather arrogant. One day, perhaps, his old teacher approaches him and says, "Congratulations! I've been watching you ever since you were a small novice. Having helped you in so many ways, it does my heart good to see you doing so well." The young monk snaps back, "What have you done for me? I worked hard for this."

Problems can occur in the Dhamma family as in any human family. In any family, one should always adopt a positive, loving and compassionate attitude toward resolving difficulties. Imagine how it could be if the members of the world family could get together with love and compassion and consideration for

each other when a disagreement arises.

In this world there are ways of solving problems which may not be very fruitful but are unfortunately widespread. Instead of acting directly and from fellowship and love, a family member might start to wash dirty linen in public; might belittle other family members; or criticize their personalities and virtues, either directly or indirectly.

Before hurling insults and accusations at another family member, one should consider one's own state of mind and circumstances. The tendency to lash out, defame and belittle is an aspect of conceit. The scriptures illustrate it with the image of a person enraged, taking up a handful of excrement to fling at his or her opponent. This person befouls himself or herself even before the opponent. So, if there are matters on which we disagree, please let us all try to exercise patience and forgiveness in the spirit of the good-hearted.

Imagine a traveler on a long and arduous journey. In the middle of a long hot day he or she comes across a tree by the side of the road, a leafy tree with deep cool shade. The traveler is delighted, and lies down at the roots of this tree for a nice nap. If the traveler cuts down the tree before he goes on his or her way, this is what the scriptures call ungrateful. Such a person does not understand the benevolence a friend has shown.

We have a responsibility to do more than refrain from chopping down our benefactors. It is true that in this world there are times when we cannot repay what we owe to those who have helped us. We will nonetheless be regarded as a good-hearted person if we can at least remember their acts of benevolence. If we can find a way to repay our debt, we should of course do so. It is quite irrelevant whether our benefactor is more virtuous than we, or is a rascal, or happens to be our equal in virtue. The only requirement for him or her to gain the status of benefactor is to have helped us in the past.

Once upon a time, a man worked very hard to support his mother. As it turned out, she was a promiscuous woman. She tried to hide this from her son, but eventually some gossiping villagers disclosed her activities to him. He answered, "Run along, friends. As long as my mum is happy, whatever she chooses to do is fine. My only duty is to work and support her."

This was a very intelligent young man. He understood the limits of his own responsibility: to repay his debt of gratitude to her who had borne and suckled him. Beyond this, his mother's behavior was her own business.

This man was one of the two types of rare and precious people in the world. The first type of rare and precious person is a benefactor: one who is benevolent and kind, who helps another person for noble reasons. The Buddha was one of these, sparing no effort to help beings liberate themselves from the sufferings of

samsara. All of us owe him grateful remembrance, and we might even consider our diligence in practice to be a form of repayment. The second type of rare and precious person is the one who is grateful, who appreciates the good that has been done for him or her, and who tries to repay it when the time is ripe. I hope you will be both types of rare and precious person, and will not succumb to the Eighth Army of Mara.

NINTH ARMY; GAIN, PRAISE, HONOR, UNDESERVED FAME

The Ninth Army of Mara is gain, praise, honor and undeserved fame. When you attain some depth of practice, your manner and behavior will improve. You will become venerable and impressive. You may even start to share the Dhamma with others, or your experience of the Dhamma may manifest outwardly in another way, perhaps in dear expositions of the scriptures. People may feel deep faith in you and may bring you gifts and donations. Word may spread that you are an enlightened person, that you give great Dhamma discourses.

At this point it would be very easy for you to succumb to the Ninth Army of Mara. The honor and respect these people direct toward you could go to your head. You might begin to subtly or overtly try to extract bigger and better donations from your followers. You might decide that you deserve renown because you really are superior to other people. Or, insincere ambition might supplant a genuine wish to help others as your motivation for teaching, for sharing whatever wisdom you have reached in your own practice. Your reflections might run as follows: "Oh, I'm pretty great. I'm popular with many people. I wonder if anyone else is as great as I am. Can I get my devotees to buy me a new car?"

The first battalion of the Ninth Army is material gain: the gifts one receives from devotees and admirers. The reverence of these same people is the second battalion; the third battalion is fame or renown.

In the outer world, Mara's Ninth Army attacks mostly those yogis who've had a good result in meditation. But it is quite unnecessary to have a band of followers. Wishes for gain can attack the most ordinary yogi, in the form of desires for grander accommodations or new outfits to wear while on a retreat. One might feel proud of one's practice and begin wishing to be acknowledged as a great yogi. People whose practice is not very deep are most susceptible to deluding themselves about their own achievements. A yogi who has had an

interesting experience or two, but little depth, can become overconfident. He or she may quickly want to step out onto the Dhamma scene and teach other people, thus becoming the object of admiration and praise. Such persons will teach a pseudo-vipassana that is not in accordance with the texts, nor with deep practical experience. They may actually harm their students.

Sincerity

To vanquish this Ninth Army, the motivation behind your effort must be sincere. If you begin practising only with the hope of getting donations, reverence, or fame, you will never make any progress. Frequent re-examination of motives can be very helpful. If you make genuine, sincere progress and later succumb to greed for gain, you will become intoxicated and negligent. It is said that a person who is intoxicated and negligent will continue a life of peacelessness and be overcome by much suffering. Satisfied with cheap gain, this person forgets the purpose of meditation, performs unskilful actions and fails to cultivate wholesomeness. Her or his practice will regress.

Perhaps, though, we believe there is an end to suffering and that we can attain this end by practising the Dhamma. This is the sincere motivation that prevents us from falling into greed for worldly gain and fame. Life means coming into being. For humans it means a very painful birth process, with death waiting at the end. In between these two events, we experience falling sick, accidents, the pain of ageing. There is also emotional pain, not getting what we desire, depressions and losses, unavoidable associations with persons and objects we dislike. To be freed from all this pain, we sit in meditation, practising the Dhamma, the path that ends in the supramundane release of nibbana. Some of us go to retreats, leaving behind worldly activities such as business, education, social obligations and the pursuit of pleasure, because we have faith that suffering can come to an end. Actually, we can legitimately consider as a retreat any place where you strive to extinguish the kilesas. When you go to such a place, even if it is the corner of the living room set aside for meditation, the Pali word for you is *pabbajita,* meaning "one who has gone forth from the world in order to extinguish the kilesas!"

Why would one want to extinguish them? Kilesas, or defilements, have a tremendous power to torture and oppress those who are not free of them. They are likened to a fire which bums and tortures and torments, When kilesas arise in a being, they burn him or her; they bring exhaustion, torment and oppression. There is not a single good thing to be said about the kilesas.

The Three Types of Kilesas

Kilesas are of three kinds: the defilements of transgression, the defilements of obsession, and the latent or dormant defilements.

Defilements of transgression occur when people cannot keep the basic precepts, and perform actions of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication.

The second class of kilesas is a bit more subtle. One may not outwardly commit any immoral action, but one's mind will be obsessed with desires to kill and destroy, hurt and harm other beings physically or otherwise. Obsessive wishes may fill the mind: to steal property, manipulate people, deceive others to obtain some desired object. If you have ever experienced this kind of obsession, you know it is a very painful state. If a person fails to control the obsessive kilesas, he or she is likely to hurt other beings in one way or another.

Dormant or latent kilesas are ordinarily not apparent. They lie hidden, waiting for the right conditions to assault the helpless mind. Dormant kilesas may be likened to a person deeply asleep. As such a person awakes, when his or her mind begins to churn, it is as if the obsessive kilesas have arisen. When the person stands up from bed and becomes involved in the day's activities, this is like moving from the obsessive kilesas to the kilesas of transgression.

These three aspects can also be discovered in a match-stick. Its phosphorus tip is like the dormant kilesas. The flame that results from striking is like the obsessive kilesas. The forest fire that ensues from careless handling of the flame is like the kilesas of transgression.

Extinguishing the Kilesas' Fire

If you are sincere in applying sila, samadhi and panna, you can overcome, extinguish and give up all three kinds of kilesas. Sila puts aside the kilesas of transgression; samadhi suppresses the obsessive ones; and wisdom uproots latent or dormant kilesas which are the cause of the other two. As you practice in this way, you can gain new kinds of happiness.

By practising sila, the delight of sensual pleasures is replaced by the happiness that comes from sincerity of conduct, morality. Due to the absence of the kilesas of transgression, a moral person lives a relatively pure, clean and blissful life. We practice sila by keeping the five basic precepts mentioned in the first chapter; and more generally by following the morality group of the Noble Eightfold Path: Right Action, Right Speech and Right Livelihood, all of which are based on not harming others or oneself.

You may wonder whether true purity of conduct is possible in the world. Of course it is! However, it is much easier to be pure in one's precepts in a retreat, where situations are simplified and temptations are kept to a minimum. This is especially true if one wishes to practice more than the basic five precepts, or if one is a monk or nun and therefore obliged to follow many rules. On retreat one

can achieve a very high success rate for any of these difficult endeavors.

Purity of conduct is only a first step. If we want to extinguish more than the coarse kilesas, some internal practice is necessary. The obsessive kilesas are vanquished by the samadhi, or the concentration group of the Noble Eightfold Path: which consists of Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. A continuous and persistent effort is needed to note and be aware of the objects that arise in each moment, without straying away. This kind of endeavor is difficult to maintain in a worldly context.

With continuous moment-to-moment effort, mindfulness and concentration, the obsessive kilesas can be kept far from the mind. The mind can enter into the object of meditation and stay there, unscattered. The obsessive kilesas have no chance to arise, unless there is a momentary slip in the practice. Freedom from these kilesas brings about a state of mind known as *upasama sukha,* the well-being and bliss of tranquillity which results from freedom from the oppressive kilesas. The mind is free from lust, greed, anger, agitation. When one has known this happiness, one sees it as superior to sense pleasure and considers it a worthwhile exchange to have put aside sensual joys to obtain it.

There is a better kind of happiness even than this, so one should not become complacent. Taking a further step, one can practice wisdom. With wisdom, the dormant kilesas can be abandoned momentarily and perhaps also permanently. When mindfulness is well developed along with its associated factors, such as energy and concentration, one begins to understand very intuitively the nature of mind and matter. The wisdom group of the Noble Eightfold Path, Right View and Right Thought, begins to be fulfilled as one naturally moves through the successive stages of insight. At every occurrence of insight, the dormant kilesas are extinguished. Through the gradual progress of insight, one may attain the noble path consciousness in which dormant kilesas are permanently extinguished.

Thus with deep practice the torture of the kilesas will diminish, will perhaps even disappear forever.

In this case, gain and respect and fame will come very naturally to you, but you will not get caught in them. They will seem paltry compared to the noble goal and dedication of your practice. Since you are sincere, you will never stop adding to your foundation of morality. You will make use of gain and fame in a fitting way, and will continue with your practice.

TENTH ARMY: SELF-EXALTATION AND

DISPARAGING OTHERS

All of us have some awareness of the fact of suffering. It is present in birth, in life and in death. Painful experiences in life often lead us to want to overcome suffering and live in freedom and peace. Perhaps it is this wish, this faith, or perhaps even a firm conviction of this that led you to read this book.

In the course of our practice, this fundamental aim may be undermined by certain by-products of the practice itself. We have discussed how gain, respect and fame can become obstacles to liberation. So, too, can the closely related problems of self-exaltation and disparaging others, the Tenth Army of Mara. This is a battle faced by meditation masters.

Self-exaltation often attacks after some gain in practice, perhaps a feeling of maturity in our precepts. We might become quite cocky, looking around and saying, "Look at that person. They're not keeping the precepts. They're not as holy as I am, not as pure." If this happens, we have fallen victim to the Tenth Army of Mara. This last army is perhaps the most lethal of all. In the Buddha's time there was even a man, Devadatta, who tried to kill the Buddha under its influence. He had grown proud of his psychic powers, his attainments in concentration and his position as a disciple. Yet when subversive thoughts came, he had no mindfulness, no defense against them.

The Essence of the Holy Life

It is possible to take delight in our own purity without disparaging others, and without self-aggrandizement. A simile might be useful here. Consider a valuable timber tree whose core is the most precious part. We can compare this tree with the holy life described by the Buddha: sila, samadhi, panna.

In cross section the tree trunk is revealed to be made of the precious core, the woody tissue, the inner bark and finally the thin epidermis of outer bark. A tree also has branches and fruits.

The holy life is composed of sila, samadhi and panna; it includes the path and fruition attainments or experiences of nibbana. There are also psychic powers, including, we might say, the psychic power of penetrating into the true nature of reality by vipassana insight. Then there are the gain, respect, and fame which can come to one through the practice.

One woodcutter may go into the forest seeking the tree's pith for some important purpose. Finding this big, handsome timber tree, he or she cuts off all the branches and takes them home. There the woodcutter finds that the branches

and leaves are useless for the intended purpose. This is like a person satisfied with gain and fame.

Another person may strip the thin outer bark from the tree. This is like a yogi who, content with purity of conduct, does not work to develop the mind any further.

A third yogi, perhaps a bit more intelligent, realizes that morality is not the end of the road: there is mental development to be considered. He or she may take up some form of meditation and work very hard. Attaining one-pointedness of mind, this yogi feels great. The mind is still and content, full of bliss and rapture. Such a person may even master the jhanas, or absorption states of deep concentration. Then the thought comes: "Boy am I feeling great, but the person next to me is as restless as ever." This yogi feels he or she has attained the essence of vipassana and the holy life. But instead she or he has only been attacked by the Tenth Army of Mara. This is like a woodcutter who is content with the inner bark of the tree and has not yet touched the core.

More ambitious, another yogi determines to develop the psychic powers. He or she attains them and is filled with pride. Moreover, it is a lot of fun to play with those new abilities. The thought may come, "Wow, this is far out. It must be the essence of the Dhamma. Not everyone can do it either. That woman over there can't see what's right under her nose, the devas and hell beings." If this person does not break free from the Tenth Army of Mara, he or she will become intoxicated and negligent in developing wholesome states of mind. His or her life will be accompanied by great suffering.

Psychic powers are not truly liberating, either. In this present age, many people are inspired by certain individuals who have developed paranormal psychic powers. For some reason even a small display of psychic ability seems to draw a great deal of faith from people. It was the same in the Buddha's time. In fact, there was once a layman who approached the Buddha with the suggestion that the Buddha should campaign for his teaching on a basis of demonstrating psychic power. For this purpose the Buddha should widely deploy all of his disciples who had psychic powers and ask them to demonstrate miracles to the people. "People will be really impressed," the layman said. "You'll get a lot of followers that way.

The Buddha refused. Three times the request was repeated, and three times it was refused. Finally the Buddha said, "Layman, there are three types of psychic powers. One is the power to fly in the air and dive into the earth, and to perform other superhuman feats. The second is the power to read other people's minds. You can tell a person, 'Ah, on such and such a day you were thinking that, and you went out to do this.' People can be very impressed with this. But there is a third psychic power, the power of instruction, whereby one can tell another, 'Ah, you have such-and-such a behavior that is not good. It is unwholesome,

unskillful, not conducive to your welfare or that of others. You should abandon that and practice in such a way as to cultivate wholesome actions. Then you should meditate as I will now instruct you.' Now, this power to guide another person on the right path is the most important psychic power.

"O layman, if the first two powers are displayed to persons who have faith in vipassana, it will not undermine their faith. But there are those who are not by nature faithful, and they would say, 'Well, that's nothing very special. I know of other sects and other religious systems wherein people can also attain such powers, through mantras and other esoteric practices.' People like that will misunderstand my teaching.

"The third type of psychic power is best, that of being able to instruct others, O layman. When one can say, 'This is bad, do not do it. You should cultivate good speech and behavior. This is the way to cleanse your mind of kilesas. This is how to meditate. This is the way to attain the bliss of nibbana, which liberates you from all suffering,' This, O layman, is the best psychic power."

By all means, go ahead and try to attain psychic powers if this interests you. It is not essential, but it does not contradict vipassana practice; there's no one to stop you, and the achievement certainly is not anything one can scoff at. Just do not mistake psychic powers for the essence of the teachings. A person who attains psychic powers and then believes he or she has reached the end of the spiritual path is much deluded. Such people seek the pith of the timber tree but are satisfied to reach only the woody outer layer. Bringing it home, they will find it of no use. So, after you attain psychic powers, please go on and develop the various vipassana insights, successive path and fruition moments, until the realization of arahantship.

When mindfulness and concentration are well-developed, the vipassana insight that penetrates into the various levels of the true nature of things will arise. This is also a form of psychic knowledge, but it is not yet the end of the path.

You may eventually attain the *sotapatti* path, the noble consciousness of the stream entrant, which is the first stage of enlightenment. Path consciousness, the first dip into nibbana, uproots certain kilesas forever. You may continue to practice and also develop the fruition consciousness. When this consciousness arises, the mind dwells in the bliss of nibbana. It is said that this liberation is unbounded by time. Once you have put forth the effort to attain it, you can return to it at any time.

However, these lower attainments still fall short of the Buddha's purpose, which was to attain full enlightenment, that final liberating consciousness which extinguishes all suffering forever.

After he had finished constructing the simile of the timber tree, the Buddha said, "The benefit of my teaching does not lie simply in gain, respect and fame. The benefit of my teaching does not lie merely in purity of conduct. It does not lie merely in the attainment of the jhanas. It does not lie merely in the attainment of psychic powers. It has as its essence the total liberation from kilesas that is attain able at any time."

I hope you will gather up strength, energy and a great deal of courage to face the Ten Armies of Mara, and to vanquish all of them with merciless compassion, so that you may be able to go through the various vipassana insights. May you at least attain the noble consciousness of the stream entrant in this very life, and after that, may you be liberated totally and finally from suffering.

4.The Seven Factors of Enlightenment

BECOMING A NOBLE ONE

One does not become enlightened by merely gazing into the sky. One does not become enlightened by reading or studying the scriptures, nor by thinking, nor by wishing for the enlightened state to burst into one's mind. There are certain necessary conditions or prerequisites which cause enlightenment to arise. In Pali these are known as the *bojjhangas,* or factors of enlightenment, and there are seven of them.

The word bojjhanga is made up of *bodhi,* which means enlightenment or an enlightened person, and *anga,* causative factor. Thus a bojjhanga is a causative factor of an enlightened being, or a cause for enlightenment. A second sense of the word bojjhanga is based on alternative meanings of its two Pali roots. The alternative meaning of bodhi is the knowledge that comprehends or sees the Four Noble Truths: the truth of universal suffering or unsatisfactoriness; the truth that desire is the cause of this suffering and dissatisfaction; the truth that there can be an end to this suffering; and the truth of the path to the end of this suffering, or the Noble Eightfold Path. The second meaning of anga is part or portion. Thus, the second meaning of bojjhanga is the specific part of knowledge that sees the Four Noble Truths.

All vipassana yogis come to understand the Four Noble Truths to some extent, but true comprehension of them requires a particular, transforming

moment of consciousness, known as path consciousness. This is one of the culminating insights of vipassana practice. It includes the experience of nibbana. Once a yogi has experienced this, he or she deeply knows the Four Noble Truths, and thus is considered to contain the bojjhangas inside him or herself. Such a person is called noble. Thus, the bojjhangas or enlightenment factors also are parts or qualities of a noble person. Sometimes they are known as the *sambojjhangas,* the prefix *sam-* meaning full, complete, correct, or true. The prefix is an honorific and intensifier, and adds no crucial difference in meaning.

These seven factors of enlightenment, or seven qualities of a noble person, are: mindfulness, investigation, effort, rapture, calm, concentration and equanimity. In Pali, the list would be *sati, dhamma vicaya, viriya, piti, passaddhi, samadhi, upekkha.* These seven can be found in all phases of vipassana practice. But if we take as a model the progressive stages of insight, we can say that the seven enlightenment factors begin to be very clear at the stage of insight where a yogi begins to see the arising and passing of phenomena.

How can one develop these factors in himself or herself? By means of satipatthana meditation. The Buddha said, "Oh bhikkhus, if the four foundations of mindfulness are practiced persistently and repeatedly, the seven types of bojjhangas will be automatically and fully developed."

Practicing the four foundations of mindfulness does not mean studying them, thinking of them, listening to discourses about them, nor discussing them. What we must do is be directly and experientially aware of the four foundations of mindfulness, the four bases on which mindfulness can be established. The *Satipatthana Sutta* names them: first, the sensations of the body; second, feeling; the painful, pleasant or neutral quality inherent in each experience; third, the mind and thought; and fourth, all other objects of consciousness; feelings seen, heard, tasted and so forth. The Buddha said, furthermore, that one should practice this awareness not intermittently, but rather persistently and repeatedly. This is exactly what we try to do in vipassana meditation. The tradition of vipassana meditation taught and developed by Mahasi Sayadaw is oriented toward developing fully the seven factors of enlightenment, and eventually experiencing noble path consciousness, in accordance with the Buddha's instructions.

MINDFULNESS: THE FIRST ENLIGHTENMENT FACTOR

Sati, mindfulness, is the first factor of enlightenment. "Mindfulness" has come to be the accepted translation of sati into English. However, this word has a kind of passive connotation which can be misleading. "Mindfulness" must be dynamic and confrontative. In retreats, I teach that mindfulness should leap forward onto the object, covering it completely, penetrating into it, not missing any part of it. To convey this active sense, I often prefer to use the words

"observing power" to translate sati, rather than "mindfulness." However, for the sake of ease and simplicity, I will consistently use the word "mindfulness" in this volume, but I would like my readers to remember the dynamic qualities it should possess.

Mindfulness can be well understood by examining its three aspects of characteristic, function and manifestation. These three aspects are traditional categories used in the *Abhidhamma,* the Buddhist description of consciousness, to describe factors of mind. We will use them here to study each of the enlightenment factors in turn.

Nonsuperficiality

The *characteristic* of mindfulness is nonsuperficiality. This suggests that mindfulness is penetrative and profound. If we throw a cork into a stream, it simply bobs up and down on the surface, floating downstream with the current. If we throw a stone instead, it will immediately sink to the very bed of the stream. So, too, mindfulness ensures that the mind will sink deeply into the object and not slip superficially past it.

Say you are watching your abdomen as the object of your satipatthana practice. You try to be very firm, focusing your attention so that the mind will not slip off, but rather will sink deeply into the processes of rising and falling. As the mind penetrates these processes, you can comprehend the true natures of tension, pressure, movement and so on.

Keeping the Object in View

The *function* of mindfulness is to keep the object always in view, neither forgetting it nor allowing it to disappear. When mindfulness is present, the occurring object will be noted without forgetfulness.

In order for nonsuperficiality and nondisappearance, the characteristic and function of mindfulness, to appear dearly in our practice, we must try to understand and practice the third aspect of mindfulness. This is the *manifestation* aspect, which develops and brings along the other two. The chief manifestation of mindfulness is confrontation: it sets the mind directly face to face with the object.

Face to Face with the Object

It is as if you are walking along a road and you meet a traveller, face to face, coming from the opposite direction. When you are meditating, the mind should meet the object in just this way. Only through direct confrontation with an object can true mindfulness arise.

They say that the human face is the index of character. If you want to size up a person, you look at his or her face very carefully and then you can make a preliminary judgement. If you do not examine the face carefully and instead become distracted by other parts of his or her body, then your judgement will not be accurate.

In meditation you must apply a similar, if not sharper, degree of care in looking at the object of observation. Only if you look meticulously at the object can you understand its true nature. When you look at a face for the first time, you get a quick, overall view of it. If you look more carefully, you will pick up details — say, of the eyebrows, eyes and lips. First you must look at the face as a whole, and only later will details become clear.

Similarly, when you are watching the rising and falling of your abdomen, you begin by taking an overall view of these processes. First you bring your mind face to face with the rising and falling. After repeated successes you will find yourself able to look closer. Details will appear to you effortlessly, as if by themselves. You will notice different sensations in the rise and fall, such as tension, pressure, heat, coolness, or movement.

As a yogi repeatedly comes face to face with the object, his or her efforts begin to bear fruit. Mindfulness is activated and becomes firmly established on the object of observation. There are no misses. The objects do not fall away from view. They neither slip away nor disappear, nor are they absent-mindedly forgotten. The kilesas cannot infiltrate this strong barrier of mindfulness. If mindfulness can be maintained for a significant period of time, the yogi can discover a great purity of mind because of the absence of kilesas. Protection from attack by the kilesas is a second aspect of the manifestation of mindfulness. When mindfulness is persistently and repeatedly activated, wisdom arises. There will be insight into the true nature of body and mind. Not only does the yogi realize the true experiential sensations of the rise and fall, but she or he also comprehends the individual characteristics of the various physical and mental phenomena happening inside herself or himself.

Seeing the Four Noble Truths

The yogi may see directly that all physical and mental phenomena share the characteristic of suffering. When this happens we say that the First Noble Truth is seen.

When the First Noble Truth has been seen, the remaining three are also seen. Thus it is said in the texts, and we can observe the same in our own experience. Because there is mindfulness at the moment of occurrence of mental and physical phenomena, no craving arises. With this abandoning of craving, the Second Noble Truth is seen. Craving is the root of suffering, and when craving is absent, suffering, too, disappears. Seeing the Third Noble Truth, the cessation

of suffering, is fulfilled when ignorance and the other kilesas fall away and cease. All this occurs on a provisional or moment-to-moment basis when mindfulness and wisdom are present. Seeing the Fourth Noble Truth refers to the development of the Eightfold Path factors. This development occurs simultaneously within each moment of mindfulness. We will discuss the factors of the Eightfold Path in more detail in the next chapter, "Chariot to Nibbana."

Therefore, on one level, we can say that the Four Noble Truths are seen by the yogi at any time when mindfulness and wisdom are present. This brings us back to the two definitions of bojjhanga given above. Mindfulness is part of the consciousness that contains insight into the true nature of reality; it is a part of enlightenment knowledge. It is present in the mind of one who knows the Four Noble Truths. Thus, it is called a factor of enlightenment, a bojjhanga.

Mindfulness is the Cause of Mindfulness

The first cause of mindfulness is nothing more than mindfulness itself. Naturally, there is a difference between the weak mindfulness that characterises one's early meditative efforts and the mindfulness at higher levels of practice, which becomes strong enough to cause enlightenment to occur. In fact, the development of mindfulness is a simple momentum, one moment of mindfulness causing the next.

Four More Ways to Develop Mindfulness

Commentators identify four additional factors which help develop and strengthen mindfulness until it is worthy of the title bojjhanga.

1. Mindfulness and Clear Comprehension

The first is *satisampajanna,* usually translated as "mindfulness and clear comprehension." In this term, sati is the mindfulness activated during formal sitting practice, watching the primary object as well as others. *Sampajanna,* clear comprehension, refers to mindfulness on a broader basis:

mindfulness of walking, stretching, bending, turning around, looking to one side, and all the other activities that make up ordinary life.

2. Avoiding Unmindful People

Dissociation from persons who are not mindful is the second way of developing mindfulness as an enlightenment factor. If you are doing your best to be mindful, and you run across an unmindful person who corners you into some long-winded argument, you can imagine how quickly your own mindfulness might vanish.

3. *Choosing Mindful Friends*

The third way to cultivate mindfulness to associate with mindful persons. Such people can serve as strong sources of inspiration. By spending time with them, in an environment where mindfulness is valued, you can grow and deepen your own mindfulness.

4. *Inclining the Mind Toward Mindfulness*

The fourth method is to incline the mind toward activating mindfulness. This means consciously taking mindfulness as a top priority, alerting the mind to return to it in every situation. This approach is very important; it creates a sense of unforgetfulness, of non-absentmindedness. You try as much as possible to refrain from those activities that do not particularly lead to the deepening of mindfulness. Of these there is a wide selection, as you probably know.

As a yogi only one task is required of you, and that is to be aware of whatever is happening in the present moment. In an intensive retreat, this means you set aside social relationships, writing and reading, even reading scriptures. You take special care when eating not to fall into habitual patterns. You always consider whether the times, places, amounts and kinds of food you eat are essential or not. If they are not, you avoid repeating the unnecessary pattern.

INVESTIGATION: THE SECOND ENLIGHTENMENT FACTOR

We say that the mind is enveloped by darkness, and as soon as insight or wisdom arises, we say that the light has come. This light reveals physical and mental phenomena so that the mind can see them clearly. It is as if you were in a dark room and were given a flashlight. You can begin to see what is present in the room. This image illustrates the second enlightenment factor, called "investigation" in English and *dhamma vicaya sambojjhanga* in Pali.

The word "investigation" may need to be elucidated. In meditation, investigation is not carried out by means of the thinking process. It is intuitive, a sort of discerning insight that distinguishes the characteristics of phenomena. *Vicaya* is the word usually translated as "investigation"; it is also a synonym for "wisdom" or "insight." Thus in vipassana practice there is no such thing as a proper investigation which uncovers nothing. When vicaya is present,

investigation and insight coincide. They are the same thing.

What is it we investigate? What do we see into? We see into dhamma. This is a word with many meanings that can be experienced personally. Generally when we say "dhamma" we mean phenomena, mind and matter. We also mean the laws that govern the behavior of phenomena. When "Dharnma" is capitalized, it refers more specifically to the teaching of the Buddha, who realized the true nature of "dhamma" and helped others to follow in his path. The commentaries explain that in the context of investigation, the word "dhamma" has an additional, specific meaning. It refers to the individual states or qualities uniquely present in each object, as well as the common traits each object may share with other objects. Thus, individual and common traits are what we should be discovering in our practice.

Knowing the True Nature of Dhammas

The characteristic of investigation is the ability to know, through discernment by a nonintellectual investigation, the true nature of dhammas.

Dispelling Darkness

The function of investigation is to dispel darkness. When dhamma vicaya is present, it lights up the field of awareness, illuminating the object of observation so that the mind can see its characteristics and penetrate its true nature. At a higher level, investigation has the function of totally removing the envelope of darkness, allowing the mind to penetrate into nibbana. So you see, investigation is a very important factor in our practice. When it is weak, or absent, there is trouble.

Dissipating Confusion

As you walk into a pitch-dark room, you may feel a lot of doubt. "Am I going to trip over something? Bang my shins? Bang into the wall?" Your mind is in confusion because you do not know what things are in the room or where they are located. Similarly, when dhamma vicaya is absent, the yogi is in a state of chaos and confusion, filled with a thousand and one doubts. "Is there a person, or is there no person? Is there a self, or no self? Am I an individual or not? Is there a soul, or is there no soul? Is there a spirit or not?"

You, too, may have been plagued by doubts like this. Perhaps you doubted the teaching of impermanence, suffering, and abscence of self. "Are you sure that everything is impermanent? Maybe some things aren't quite so unsatisfactory as others. Maybe there's a self-essence we haven't found yet." You may feel that nibbana is a fairy tale invented by your teachers, that it does not really exist.

The manifestation of investigation is the dissipation of confusion. When dhamma vicaya sambojjhanga arises, everything is brightly lit, and the mind sees clearly what is present. Seeing clearly the nature of mental and physical phenomena, you no longer worry about banging into the wall. Impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and absence of self will become quite clear to you. Finally, you may penetrate into the true nature of nibbana, such that you'll not need to doubt its reality.

Ultimate Realities

Investigation shows us the characteristics of *paramattha dhamma,* or ultimate realities, which simply means objects that can be experienced directly without the mediation of concepts. There are three types of ultimate realities: physical phenomena, mental phenomena, and nibbana.

Physical phenomena are composed of the four great elements, earth, fire, water and air. Each element has separate characteristics which are peculiar to and inherent in it.

When we say "characterized" we could also say "experienced as," for we experience the characteristics of each of these four elements in our own bodies, as sensations.

Earth's specific or individual characteristic is hardness. Water has the characteristic of fluidity and cohesion. Fire's characteristic is temperature, hot and cold. Air, or wind, has characteristics of tightness, tautness, tension or piercing, and an additional dynamic aspect, movement.

Mental phenomena also have specific characteristics. For example, the mind, or consciousness, has the characteristic of knowing an object. The mental factor of *phassa,* or contact, has the characteristic of impingement.

Please bring your attention right now to the rising and falling of your abdomen. As you are mindful of the movement, you may perhaps come to know that it is composed of sensations. Tightness, tautness, pressure, movement — all these are manifestations of the wind element. You may feel heat or cold as well, the element of fire. These sensations are objects of your mind; they are the dhammas which you investigate. If your experience is perceived directly, and you are aware of the sensations in a specific way, then we can say dhamma vicaya is present.

Investigation can also discern other aspects of the Dhamma. As you observe the rising and falling movements, you may spontaneously notice that there are two distinct processes occurring. On the one hand are physical phenomena, the sensations of tension and movement. On the other hand is consciousness, the noting mind which is aware of these objects. This is an insight into the true

nature of things. As you continue to meditate, another kind of insight will arise. You will see that all dhammas share characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and absence of self. The factor of investigation has led you to see what is universal in nature, in every physical and mental object.

With the maturation of this insight into impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and absence of self, wisdom becomes able to penetrate nibbana. In this case, the word dhamma takes nibbana as its referent. Thus, dhamma vicaya can also mean discerning insight into nibbana.

There is something outstanding about nibbana in that it has no characteristics in common with phenomena that can be perceived. It has specific characteristics of its own, however: permanence, eternity, nonsuffering, bliss and happiness. Like other objects, it is called *anatta,* nonself, but the nonself nature of nibbana is different from the nonself of ordinary phenomena in that it does not rest upon suffering and impermanence. It rests instead on bliss and permanence. When the mind penetrates nibbana, this distinction becomes evident through dhamma vicaya, the investigative discerning insight into the dhamma, which has led us to this place and now allows us to see it clearly.

Spontaneous Insight is the Cause of Investigation

We might be interested in knowing how we can get this factor of investigation to arise. According to the Buddha, there is only one cause of it: there must be a spontaneous insight, a direct perception. To realize such an insight, you must activate mindfulness. You must be aware in a pene trative manner of whatever arises. Then the mind can gain insight into the true nature of phenomena. This accomplish ment requires wise attention, appropriate attention. You direct the mind toward the object, mindfully. Then you will have that first insight or direct perception. The factor of investigation arises, and because of it, further insights will follow naturally in order, as a child progresses from kindergarten through high school and college and finally graduates.

Seven More Ways to Develop Investigation

The commentaries speak of seven additional ways to support the arising of investigation as a factor of enlighten ment.

The first is to ask questions about the Dhamma and the practice. This means finding a person who is knowledgeable about the Dhamma and speaking with him or her. There is no doubt that Westerners can quite easily fulfil this first requirement. They are adept at asking complicated questions. This capacity is good; it will lead to the development of wisdom.

2. *Cleanliness*

The second support is cleanliness of what are called the internal and external bases. These are nothing more than the body and the environment. Keeping the internal base, or body, clean means bathing regularly, keeping hair and nails well groomed, and making sure the bowels are free of constipation. Keeping the external base clean means wearing clean and neat clothes and sweeping, dusting and tidying your living quarters. This helps the mind become bright and clear. When the eyes fall upon dirt and untidiness, mental confusion tends to arise. But if an environment is clean, the mind becomes bright and clear. This mental state is ideally conducive to the development of wisdom.

3. A Balanced Mind

The third support for the arising of investigation is balancing the controlling faculties of faith, wisdom, mindfulness, energy and concentration. We treated them at length in an earlier chapter. Four of these five faculties are paired: wisdom and faith, effort and concentration. The practice depends in fundamental ways upon the equilibrium of these pairs.

If faith is stronger than wisdom, one is apt to become gullible or to be carried away by excessive devotional thoughts, a hindrance to practice. Yet, on the other hand, if knowledge or intelligence is in excess, a cunning and manipulative mind results. One can deceive oneself in many ways, even about the truth.

The balance between effort and concentration works like this: if one is overenthusiastic and works too hard, the mind becomes agitated and cannot focus properly on the object of observation. Slipping off, it wanders about, causing much frustration. Too much concentration, however, can lead to laziness and drowsiness. When the mind is still and it seems easy to remain focused on the object, one might begin to relax and settle back. Soon one dozes off.

This balancing of faculties is an aspect of meditation that teachers must understand quite thoroughly in order to guide their students. The most basic way of maintaining balance, and of reestablishing it when it is lost, is to strengthen the remaining controlling faculty, mindfulness.

4-5. Avoiding Fools, Making Friends with the Wise

The fourth and fifth supports for investigation are to avoid foolish, unwise persons and to associate with wise ones. What is a wise person? One person may be learned in the scriptures. Another may be able to think things through with great clarity. If you associate with these people, your theoretical learning will surely increase and you will cultivate a philosophical attitude. This activity is not at all bad. Another sort of wise person, however, can give you knowledge and wisdom beyond what is found in books. The scriptures tell us that the

minimum prerequisite defining such a person is that he or she must have practiced meditation and reached the stage of insight into the arising and passing away of all phenomena. If one has not reached this stage, it goes without saying that one should never try to teach meditation, since associating with one's students will not foster the arising of dhamma vicaya in them.

6. Reflection on Profound Truth

The sixth support for investigation is reflection on profound Dlmmma. This instruction to think about something might seem contradictory. Basically it means reflecting on the nature of physical and mental phenomena from the vipassana point of view: as aggregates, elements and faculties, all of them impersonal.

7. Total Cummitment

The last important support for the arising of investigation is total commitment to cultivating this factor of enlightenment. One should always have the inclination toward investigation, toward direct intuitive insight. Remember that it is not necessary to rationalize or intellectualize your experiences. Just practice meditation, so that you can gain a firsthand experience of your own mind and body.

COURAGEOUS EFFORT: THIRD FACTOR OF ENLIGHTENMENT

The third enlightenment factor, effort or *viriya,* is the energy expended to direct the mind persistently, continuously, toward the object of observation. In Pali, viriya is defined as *viranam bhavo,* which means "the state of heroic ones." This gives us an idea of the flavor, the quality, of effort in our practice. It should be courageous effort.

People who are hardworking and industrious have the capacity to be heroic in whatever they do. It is effort itself, in fact, that gives them a heroic quality. A person endowed with courageous effort will be bold in going forward, unafraid of the difficulties he or she may encounter in executing a chosen task. Commentators say that the characteristic of effort is an enduring patience in the face of suffering or difficulty. Effort is the ability to see to the end no matter what, even if one has to grit one's teeth.

Yogis need patience and acceptance from the very beginning of practice. If you come to a retreat, you leave behind the pleasant habits and hobbies of ordinary life. You sleep little, on makeshift mattresses in tiny cells. Then you get up and spend the day trying to sit immobile and cross-legged, hour upon hour. On top of the sheer austerity of practice, you must be patient with your mind's dissatisfaction, its longing for the good things of home.

Anytime you actually get down to the work of meditation, moreover, you are likely to experience bodily resistance and some level of pain. Say you are trying to sit still for an hour with your legs crossed. Just fifteen minutes into the sitting, a nasty mosquito comes and bites you. You itch. On top of that, your neck is a bit stiff and there's a creeping numbness in your foot. You may start to feel irritated. You are used to a luxurious life. Your body is so pampered and spoon-fed that you usually shift its position whenever it feels the slightest discomfort. Now, alas, your body must suffer. And because it is suffering, you suffer as well.

Unpleasant sensations have the uncanny ability to exhaust and wither the mind. The temptation to give up can be very great. Your mind may fill with rationalizations:

"I'll just move my foot a tiny inch; it'll improve my concentration." It may be only a matter of time before you give in.

Patient Endurance

You need courageous effort, with its characteristic of forbearance in the face of difficulty. If you raise your energy level, the mind gains strength to bear with pain in a patient and courageous way. Effort has the power to freshen the mind and keep it robust, even in difficult circumstances. To increase your energy level, you can encourage yourself, or perhaps seek out the inspiration of a spiritual friend or guide. Fed with a bit more energy, the mind grows taut and strong once more.

Support for the Exhausted Mind

Commentators say that effort has the function of supporting. It supports the mind when it withers under attack by pain.

Consider an old, dilapidated house on the point of collapse. A slight gust of wind will bring it tumbling down. If you prop it up with two-by-fours, though, the house can continue to stand. Similarly, a mind withered by pain can be supported by courageous effort and can continue the practice with freshness and vigilance. You may have experienced this benefit personally.

Yogis who suffer from chronic ailments may have difficulty practising in a

regular way. Confronting an ailment again and again saps physical and mental energy; it is taxing and discouraging. It is no surprise that yogis who have sicknesses often come to interviews full of despair and disappointment. They feel they are making no progress. They merely hit a wall again and again. It all seems so futile. Little thoughts occur to them, wanting to give up, wanting to leave the retreat or just stop meditating. Sometimes I can save this situation with a little discourse or a word of encouragement. The yogi's face lights up and he or she is on the road again for a day or two.

It is very important to have encouragement and inspiration, not only from yourself but from someone else who can help you along, give you a push when you get stuck.

Courageous Mind: The Story of Citta

The manifestation of effort is a bold, brave and courageous mind. To illustrate this quality, there is a story from the Buddha's time of a bhikkhuni named Citta. One day she reviewed the suffering inherent in mind and body and was seized by a great spiritual urgency. As a result she renounced the world and took nun's robes, hoping to free herself from suffering. Unfortunately, she had a chronic ailment which came in spasms, without warning. One day she would feel fine, and then suddenly she would fall ill. She was a determined lady, though. She wanted liberation and was not one to call it quits. Whenever she was healthy she would strive intensely, and when she was sick she continued, though at a lesser pace. Sometimes her practice was very dynamic and inspired. Then the ailment attacked, and she would regress.

Her sister bhikkhunis worried that Citta would over-strain herself. They warned her to take care of her health, to slow down, but Citta ignored them. She meditated on, day after day, month after month, year after year. As she grew older she had to lean on a staff to move around. Her body was weak and bony, but her mind was robust and strong.

One day Citta decided she was sick of putting up with all this impediment, and made a totally committed decision. She said to herself, "Today I'm going to do my very best without considering my body at all. Either I die today or the kilesas will be vanquished."

Citta started walking up a hill with her staff. Very mindfully, step by step, she went. Old and thin and feeble, at times she had to get down and crawl. But her mind was persistent and heroic. She was absolutely, totally committed to the Dhamma. Every step she took, every inch she crawled, toward the peak of the hill was made with mindfulness. When she reached the top, she was exhausted, but her mindfulness had not been broken.

Citta made again her resolution to vanquish the kilesas once and for all or to

be vanquished by death. She practiced on as hard as she could, and it seems that on that very day she reached her goal. She was filled with joy and rapture, and when she descended the hill it was with strength and clarity of mind. She was a very different person from the Citta who had crawled up the hill. Now she was fresh and robust, with a clear and calm expression. The other bhikkhunis were astounded to see Citta like this. They asked her by what miracle she had been transformed. When Citta explained what had happened to her, the bhikkhunis were filled with awe and praise.

The Buddha said, "Far better is it to live a day striving in meditation than one hundred years without striving." In business, politics, social affairs and education, we always find that the leaders are people who work hard. Hard work brings you to the peak of any field. This is a fact of life. Effort's role is obvious in meditation as well. Meditation practice takes a great deal of energy. You have to really work to establish continuity of mindfulness and maintain it from moment to moment without a break. In this endeavor there is no room for laziness.

A Heat that Vaporizes Defilements

The Buddha spoke of energy as a kind of heat, *atapa.* When the mind is filled with energy, it becomes hot. This mental temperature has the power to dry up defilements. We can compare the kilesas to moisture; a mind devoid of energy is easily dampened and weighed down by them. If effort is strong, however, the mind can vaporize kilesas before it is even touched by them. Thus, when the mind is energized by effort, mental defilements cannot touch it, or even come near. Unwholesome states cannot attack.

On matter's molecular level, heat appears as increased vibration. A red-hot iron bar is actually vibrating rapidly, and it becomes flexible and workable. This is so in meditation, too. When effort is strong, the increased vibration in the mind is manifested as agility. The energized mind jumps from one object to another with ease and quickness. Contacting phenomena, it heats them up, melting the illusion of solidity, so that passing away is clearly seen.

Sometimes when momentum is strong in practice, effort carries on by itself, just as an iron bar remains red-hot for a long time after it has left the fire. With the kilesas far away, clarity and brightness appear in the mind. The mind is pure and clear in its perception of what is happening. It becomes sharp, and very interested in catching the details of phenomena as they arise. This energetic mindfulness allows the mind to penetrate deeply into the object of observation and to remain there without scattering and dispersing. With mindfulness and concentration established, there is space for clear intuitive perception, wisdom, to arise.

Through diligent effort, then, the wholesome factors of mindfulness,

concentration and wisdom arise and strengthen, and bring with them other wholesome, happy states. The mind is clear and sharp, and it begins to enter more deeply into the true nature of reality.

Disadvantages of Laziness and Delights of Freedom

If instead there is sloppiness and laziness, your attention becomes blunt and noxious states of mind creep in. As you lose focus, you do not care whether you are in a wholesome state of mind or not. You might think your practice can coast along with no help from you. This kind of audacity, a lazy sort of boldness, can undermine you, slow you down. Your mind becomes damp and heavy, full of negative and unwholesome tendencies, like a mildewed horse blanket that has been left out in the rain.

Ordinarily the kilesas pull the mind into their field of sensual pleasures. This is especially true for *raga,* lust, one aspect of desire. People who are devoid of courageous effort are helpless in raga's grip. They sink again and again into the field of sensual pleasures. If effort is injected into the mind, though, the mind can free itself from this harmful energy field. The mind becomes very light, like a rocket that has succeeded in entering the weightlessness of outer space. Freed from the heaviness of desire and aversion, the mind fills instead with rapture and calm, as well as other delightful, free states of mind. This kind of delight can only be enjoyed through the fire of one's own efforts.

You may have experienced this freedom personally. Perhaps one day you were meditating while someone was baking cookies nearby. A delicious smell came floating into your nostrils. If you were really mindful, you simply noted this smell as an object. You knew it was pleasant, but no attachment or clinging arose. You weren't compelled to get up from your cushion and ask for one of those cookies. It might have been similar had an unpleasant object come to you. You would have felt no aversion. Confusion and delusion may also have been absent. When you see clearly the nature of mind and matter, unwholesome factors cannot control you.

Food can be one of the most difficult areas for meditators, especially on retreat. Leaving aside the whole problem of greed, yogis often feel strong disgust toward food. When one is really mindful, one can make the shocking discovery that food is quite tasteless on the tongue. As practice deepens, some yogis begin to find food so repulsive that they are unable to eat more than one or two bites. Alternatively, when yogis experience strong rapture, this rapture becomes a nourishment for their minds, such that they entirely lose their appetite. Both of these types of yogis should try to overcome their initial reactions and make a concerted effort to eat sufficient food to maintain their energy. When the body is deprived of physical nutriment it loses strength and stamina, and eventually this undermines the meditation practice.

One may dream of getting the benefits of viriya, but if one does not actually strive for them, it is said that one wallows in disgust. The Pali word for such a person is *kusita.* In the world a person who does not work to support him or herself and family will be looked down upon by others. He or she might be called a lazybones or insulted in various ways. The word kusita refers specifically to someone who is abused verbally. In practice it is the same. At times energy is essential. A yogi who cannot muster the effort to confront a difficult experience, but cringes instead, could be said to be "chickening out." He or she has no courage, no sense of boldness, no bravery at all.

A lazy person lives in misery, lives with suffering. Not only is he or she held in low esteem by others, but also kilesas arise easily when effort is low. Then the mind is assailed by the three kinds of wrong thoughts: thoughts of craving, of destruction and of cruelty. These mental states are oppressive, painful and unpleasant in themselves. A lazy person can easily be pounced upon by sloth and torpor, another unpleasant state. Furthermore, without energy it may be difficult to maintain the basic precepts. One breaks the precepts at one's own expense; one loses the joy and benefit of moral purity.

The work of meditation is seriously undermined by laziness. It robs a yogi of the chance to see into the true nature of things, or to raise his or her mind to greater heights. Therefore, the Buddha said, a lazy person loses many beneficial things.

Persistence

For effort to develop to the point of being a factor of enlightenment, it must have the quality of persistence. This means that energy doesn't drop or stagnate. Rather, it continually increases. With persistent effort, the mind is protected from wrong thoughts. There is so much energy that sloth and torpor cannot arise. Yogis feel a sort of durability of precepts, as well as of concentration and insight. They experience the benefit of effort, a mind that is bright and clear and full of strength, active and energetic.

Understanding about good effort is clear just after one has enjoyed a major success in meditation. Perhaps one has watched extremely painful sensations and penetrated them without reacting or becoming oppressed by them. The mind feels a great satisfaction and heroism in its own accomplishment. The yogi realizes for himself or herself that, thanks to effort, the mind has not succumbed to difficulty but has gone beyond it and has emerged victorious.

Wise Attention is the Cause of Energy

The Buddha was brief in describing how effort or energy arises. It is caused by wise attention, he said, wise reflection on being committed to arousing the

three elements of effort.

Stages of Energy: Leaving the Field of the Kilesas

The Buddha's three elements of effort are launching effort, liberating effort, and persistent effort.

Launching effort is needed at the beginning of a period of practice, particularly on a retreat. At first the mind is overwhelmed by the new situation, and may long for all the things left behind. To get moving on the path of meditation, you reflect on the benefits of your task and then start really putting in the effort to be mindful. When a yogi first starts to practice, only very basic objects are prescribed. You are directed just to watch the primary object and only to attend to other objects when they become distracting. This simple yet fundamental endeavor comprises the first kind of effort, launching effort. It is like the first stage of a rocket which gets the rocket off the ground.

Once you can be mindful of the primary object for some time, you still do not always have smooth sailing. Hindrances come up, or painful sensations, or sleepiness. You find yourself an innocent victim of pain, impatience, greed, drowsiness and doubt. Perhaps you have been enjoying some degree of calm and comfort because you have been able to stay with the primary object, but suddenly difficult objects assault you. At this time the mind has a tendency to become discouraged and lazy. Launching effort is no longer enough. You need an extra boost to face pain and sleepiness, to get above the hindrances.

The second stage of energy, liberating energy, is like the second stage of a rocket which pushes through the earth's atmosphere. Encouragement from a teacher might help here, or you can reflect for yourself on the good reasons to arouse liberating energy. Armed with internal and external encouragements, you now make a concerted effort to observe the pain. If you are able to overcome your difficulty, you will feel very exhilarated; your energy will surge. You will be ready to go for anything that comes into your field of awareness. Perhaps you overcome a back pain, or you look into an attack of drowsiness and see that it vanishes like a little wisp of cloud. The mind grows refreshed, bright and clear. You may feel an energy high. This is the direct experience of liberating energy.

After this the practice may go smoothly, and the mind may feel satisfied. Do not be surprised if the teacher suddenly assigns you extra homework, such as asking you to pay attention to several touch points on the body. This guidance is to encourage persistent energy, the third kind of energy. Persistent energy is necessary to keep deepening your practice, drawing you toward your goal. It is like the third stage of a rocket which gives it the energy to escape altogether from the earth's gravitational field. As you develop persistent energy, you will begin to travel through the stages of insight.

It is easy to forget that the temporary happiness you feel today in practice will pass away when you return to the world, unless you attain some deeper level of peace. You might reflect on this for yourself. Why are you practicing? I feel that the minimum goal is to become a *sotapanna,* or stream enterer, to reach the first stage of enlightenment, which frees you from rebirth in dangerous and painful lower realms. Whatever your goal is, you should never be complacent until you reach it. For this you need to develop a persistent effort that neither de creases nor stagnates. It grows and grows until it finally brings you to your destination. When effort is well developed in this way, it is called in Pali *paggahita viriya.*

Finally, at the end of practice, effort achieves a fourth aspect, called fulfilling effort. This is what takes you completely beyond the gravity field of sense pleasures into the freedom of nibbana. Perhaps you are interested to see what this is like? Well, make an effort and you might find out.

RAPTURE: FOURTH FACTOR OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Piti, or rapture, has the characteristic of happiness, delight and satisfaction. It is in itself a mental state possessing these characteristics. But a further characteristic of rapture is that it can pervade associated mental states, making them delightful and happy and bringing a sense of deep satisfaction.

Lightness and Agility

Rapture fills the mind and body with lightness and agility. This, according to the classical analysis, is its function. The mind becomes light and energized. The body also feels agile, light and workable. The manifestation of rapture is in actual sensations of lightness in the body. Rapture manifests very clearly through physical sensations.

When rapture occurs, coarse and uncomfortable sensations are replaced with something very soft and gentle, velvet smooth and light. You may feel such a lightness of body that it seems as if you are floating in the air. At times the lightness may be active rather than still. You may feel as if you were being pushed or pulled, swayed and rocked, or as if you are traveling on rough water. You may feel off-balance, but it is nonetheless very pleasant.

The Five Types of Rapture

There are five types of rapture. The first is called "Lesser Rapture." At the beginning of practice, after the hindrances have been kept at bay for sufficient periods of time, yogis may begin feeling chills and thrills of pleasure, some times goose bumps. This is the beginning of rapturous feelings.

The next type is called "Momentary Rapture." It comes in flashes like lightning and is more intense than the first type. The third kind is "Overwhelming Rapture." The classical simile is of someone sitting by the sea and suddenly seeing a huge wave that is coming to engulf her or him. Yogis experience a similar feeling of being swept off the ground. Their hearts thump; they are overwhelmed; they wonder what is happening.

The fourth type of rapture is "Uplifting or Exhilarating Rapture." With this, you feel so light that you might think you are sitting a few feet off the ground. You feel as if you are floating about or flying, rather than walking on the earth.

The fifth type of rapture, "Pervasive Rapture," is the strongest of all. It fills the body, every pore. If you are sitting, you feel fantastically comfortable and you have no desire at all to get up. Instead, there is a great interest in continuing to sit without moving.

The first three types of rapture are called *pamojja,* or weak rapture. The last two deserve the rightful name of *piti*, strong rapture. The first three are causes of, or stepping stones toward, the stronger two.

Wise Attention Causes Rapture

As with effort, the Buddha said there is only one cause for rapture: wise attention. Specifically, this is wise attention to being effortful in bringing about wholesome rapturous feelings connected with the Buddha, Dhamma and sangha.

Eleven More Ways to Develop Rapture

The commentaries give eleven ways of arousing rapture.:

1. Remembering the virtues of the Buddha

The first way is *buddhanussati,* recollecting the virtues of the Buddha. He has quite a number of virtues, and it might not be necessary for you to go through all of the traditional lists of them before the first hints of rapture begin to appear. For example, the first traditionally listed virtue is the quality of *araha.* This means that the Buddha is worthy of respect by all humans, devas and brahmas, due to the purity he attained by uprooting all kilesas. Think about the purity he achieved in this way, and perhaps some joy will come up in you. You might also recollect the Buddha's three accomplishments as described in our

discussion of courageous effort.

However, reflections and recitation of formulas are not the only way to recollect the Buddha's virtues. In fact, these are far less reliable than one's own intuitive insights. When a yogi attains the insight into arising and passing away, rapture arises naturally, and so does an appreciation of the Buddha's virtues. The Buddha himself said, "One who sees the Dhamma sees me." A yogi who attains insight will truly be able to appreciate the greatness of the founder of our lineage. You might say to yourself, "If I am able to experience such purity of mind, how much greater the Buddha's purity must have been!"

2. *Rejoicing in the Dhamma*

The second way of arousing rapture is to recollected the Dhamma and its virtues. The first traditional virtue is expressed in a phrase: "Well spoken is the Dhamma by the Buddha, indeed well proclaimed is the Dhamma by the Buddha." The Buddha taught the Dhamma in the most effective way, and your present teachers have reliably transmitted it. This is indeed a cause for rejoicing.

The Buddha spoke at length about the threefold training of sila, samadhi and panna. To follow the training, we first maintain purity of conduct by keeping the precepts. We try to develop a high level of moral integrity through taming our actions and speech. This will bring us many benefits. First, we will be free from self-judgement, self- blame and remorse. We are free from censure by the wise, and from punishment by the law.

Next if we follow the Buddha's instructions, we will develop concentration. If you are faithful, consistent and patient, you can experience a mind that is happy and clear, bright and peaceful. This is *samatha sukha,* the happiness that comes from concentration and tranquility of mind. You can even attain the various levels of jhanas or absorptions, states of consciousness in which the kilesas are temporarily suppressed and an extraordinary peace results.

Then, practicing vipassana, we have the chance to experience a third kind of happiness. As you penetrate deeper into the Dhamma, attaining the stage of insight into the rise and fall of phenomena, you will feel exhilarating rapture. This happiness could be called "Thrilling Happiness." Later on comes the "Happiness of Clarity." And eventually, when you reach the insight called *sankharupekkhanana,* the insight into equanimity regarding all formations, you will experience the "Happiness of Equanimity." It is a profound delight, not so agitated and thrilling, but very subtle and balanced.

Thus, true to the promises and guarantees of the Buddha, those who follow the path of practice will be able to experience all these sorts of happiness. If you manage to experience all these kinds of happiness yourself, you can deeply appreciate the truth of the Buddha's words. You too will say, "Well spoken is the

Dhamma by the Buddha, indeed well proclaimed is the Dhamma by the Buddha."

Finally, transcending all these kinds of happiness is the ultimate "Happiness of Cessation." Going beyond the happiness of equanimity, a yogi can experience a moment of insight into nibbana which comes about with the attainment of noble path consciousness. After this, a yogi feels a depth of appreciation for the Buddha's Dhamma that he or she may never have known before. Did the Buddha not say, "if you meditate in this way, you can arrive at the cessation of suffering?" This is true. Many people have experienced it; and when finally you know for yourself, your mind will sing with rapture and gratitude.

Great Possibilities that come to Fruition in Practice

Thus, there are three ways of appreciating the fact that the Dhamma is well proclaimed. First, if you think deeply about the great possibilities that lie within meditation practice, your mind will be full of praises for the Dhamma — and of rapture, too, of course. Perhaps you naturally possess great faith, so that whenever you hear a discourse or read about the Dhamma you are filled with rapture and interest. This is the first of three ways of appreciating the Dhamma. Second, if you enter the practice itself, the promises and guarantees of the Buddha will certainly begin to come true. Sila and samadihi will improve your life. This teaches you more intimately how well proclaimed the Dhamma is, for it has brought you clarity of mind and a deep, subtle happiness. Third and finally, the greatness of the Dhamma can be seen in the practice of wisdom, which leads eventually to the happiness of nibbana. At this point profound changes may take place in your life. It is like being reborn. You can imagine the rapture and appreciation you would feel at this point.

3. Rejoicing in the Virtues of the Sangha

Recollecting the virtues of the sangha is the third major way of developing rapture listed in the commentaries. The sangha is the group of noble individuals who are totally committed to the Dhamma, striving earnestly and patiently. They follow the path in a straight and correct way and arrive at their respective destinations.

If you have experienced some purity of mind in your practice, you can imagine others feeling the same thing, and perhaps even deeper levels, far beyond what you have known. If you have attained some degree of enlightenment, you will be endowed with unshakable faith in the existence of other noble ones who have traversed this same path with you. Such people are indeed pure and impeccable.

4. Considering Your Own Virtue

The fourth way of arousing rapture is to consider the purity of your own conduct. Impeccability of conduct is a powerful virtue which brings a great sense of satisfaction and joy to its possessor. It takes great perseverance to maintain purity. When you review your own efforts in this regard you may feel a deep sense of fulfilment and exhilaration. If you cannot maintain pure conduct, you will be invaded by remorse and self-judgment. You will not be able to concentrate on what you are doing, and thus your practice cannot progress.

Virtue is the foundation of concentration and wisdom. There are many examples of people who have attained enlightenment by turning their mindfulness toward the rapture that arises from their contemplation of the purity of their own sila. This contemplation can be particularly helpful in an emergency.

Rapture during an Emergency: The Story of Tissa

There was a young man called Tissa who, upon listening to the Buddha, was struck with a great sense of urgency. He was a very ambitious person, but he felt a deep sense of emptiness in the world and so he turned his ambition toward becoming an arahant. Soon he renounced the worldly life and took the robes of a monk.

Before he ordained, he gave some of his property to his younger brother Culatissa, a gift which made his younger brother very prosperous. Unfortunately, Culatissa's wife suddenly became very greedy. She was afraid that the bhikkhu might change his mind, disrobe, and come to reclaim his property, which would deplete her own situation. Culatissa's wife tried to think of ways to protect her newly-acquired wealth, and finally fell upon the idea of calling some hit men. She promised them a handsome prize if they would kill the bhikkhu.

The thugs agreed, and went in search of this bhikkhu in the forest. Finding him immersed in his practice, they surrounded him and prepared to kill him. The bhikkhu said, "Please wait a while. 1 haven't finished my job yet."

"How can we wait?" one thug replied. 'We've got a job to do as well."

"Just a night or two," the bhikkhu pleaded. "Then you can come back and kill me."

"We don't buy that! You'll run away! Give us a guarantee that you won't."

The bhikkhu had no material possessions beyond his bowl and robe, so he could not leave any deposit with the hit men. Instead, he took a huge boulder and smashed both his thigh bones. Satisfied that he could not escape, the thugs

retreated and left him to his striving.

You can imagine what a strong desire the young man had to uproot the kilesas. He was not afraid to die or suffer pain. But he was afraid of the kilesas, which were still very much alive in him. He had his life, but he had not finished his work yet, and he dreaded the thought of dying before he had uprooted the defilements.

Since this young man had renounced the world with such deep faith, he must have been quite diligent in developing his mindfulness. His practice must have been strong enough to face the excruciating pain of smashed thigh-bones, for he watched that intense pain without giving in. While he watched, he reflected on his own virtue. He asked himself whether he had broken any of the bhikkhu's precepts since the day of his ordination. To his delight, he found that he had been perfectly pure without committing a single offense. This realization filled him with satisfaction and rapture.

The pain of his fractured limbs subsided, and intense rapture became the most prominent object in the young man's mind. He turned his mindfulness toward it, and noted rapture, happiness and joy. As he was noting in this way, his insight matured and speeded up. Suddenly he broke through: he experienced the Four Noble Truths and became an arahant in a short space of time.

The moral of this story is that one should build a good foundation in sila. Without sila, sitting meditation is no more than an invitation to aches and pains. Build up your foundation! If your sila is powerful, your meditative efforts will prove very fruitful.

5. *Remembering Your Own Generosity*

The fifth way of arousing rapture is to recollect one's own generosity. If one can perform an act of charity without any selfish motivation at all, but rather wishing for the welfare and happiness of others, or wishing for liberation from suffering, then that act will be full of merit. Not only that, but the act brings great happiness and gladness into your mind. Motivation is crucial in determining whether generosity is beneficial. it should not be motivated by ulterior selfishness.

Generosity is not only financial. It can also mean simply encouraging a friend who is in need of support. it is most important to be generous in times of scarcity and these can also be the most satisfying time to shares the little that one has.

There is a story of a king in Sri Lanka in the old days. seems that one day he was retreating hastily from a baffle, carrying only the barest of provisions. While he was going through the forest he chanced upon a bhikkhu making alms

rounds. The bhikkhu was an arahant, it seems. The king gave part of his food to that monk, even though he only had enough for himself, his horse and his attendant. Much later, when he recalled all the gifts he had given in his life, some of which had been splendid and precious, this was the one he cherished most.

Another story on this subject is set in the Mahasi Sasana Yeiktha, a center in Rangoon. Some years ago, when the center still was in a slow process of development some of the yogis could not afford to pay for their food and accommodations. People were poor at that time. But these yogis were making good progress, and it was a great pity to see them leaving the center only because they could not afford to stay. So the meditation teachers got together and supported those yogis who had strong potential. Indeed, these students made tremendous progress. When the yogis succeeded in attaining their goals, the teachers were filled with joy and rapture.

6. Considering the Virtues of the Gods

The sixth way to bring rapture is to think of the virtues of the devas and brahmas, beings in the higher realms. While these beings were still in the human realm, they had great faith in kamma. They believed that good actions will bring a reward, and harm will bring harmful consequences. So, they tried to practice what was good and refrain from unskilful actions. Some of them even meditated. The positive force of these beings' actions resulted in their rebirth in higher planes, where life is more pleasant than it is in our human world. Those who gained absorption in the jhanas were reborn in the brahma world, with lifespans lasting eons. Thus, when we think of the virtues of super human beings, we actually consider the faith, charity, effort and perseverance which they developed in the human world. It is easy to compare them with ourselves. If we can find ourselves on a par with the devas and brahmas, we can be filled with satisfaction and joy.

7. Reflecting on Perfect Peace

The seventh way of arousing rapture is to reflect on the peace of the cessation of kilesas. In the ultimate sense, this means reflecting on nibbana. If you have experienced this depth of peace, you can bring up a lot of rapture upon recollecting it.

If you have not yet experienced nibbana yourself, you can reflect on the coolness of deep concentration or jhana. The peace of deep concentration is far superior to worldly pleasures. There are people whose skill at absorption is so strong that even when they are not actually practicing concentration, their minds are never invaded by the kilesas. Thus, for sixty or seventy years they may live in peace. To think about this degree of coolness and clarity can bring about

extraordinary joy.

If you have not experienced jhana, then you can remember times in your practice when the mind felt pure and clean. When the kilesas are put aside for some time, tranquility and coolness naturally fill the mind. You may find yourself comparing this with the happiness you may have enjoyed in this world. You will see that worldly happiness is quite coarse and gross in comparison with the happiness of practice. Unlike the rapture of coolness that arises from purity of mind, there is something burning about worldly pleasures. Comparing thus, you may be filled with rapture.

8-9. Avoiding Coarse People, Seeking Refined Friends

The eighth and ninth ways of arousing rapture are related. They are to avoid rough and coarse persons, persons overwhelmed by anger and lacking in *metta,* or loving kindness; and to seek out refined persons who have metta in their hearts. In this world there are many people who are so overwhelmed by anger that they cannot appreciate the difference between wholesome and unwholesome activities. They do not know the benefit or appropriateness of paying respect to persons worthy of respect. nor of learning about the Dhamma, nor of actually meditating. They may be hot-tempered, easily victimized by anger and aversion. Their lives may be filled with rough and distasteful activities. Living with such a person, you can imagine, might not be a very rapturous experience.

Other people have a deep considerateness and loving care for other beings. The warmth and love of their hearts is manifested in actions and speech. Refined individuals like these carry out their relationships in a subtle, sweet way. Gaining their company is very fulfilling. One is surrounded by an aura of love and warmth, which leads to the arising of rapture.

10. Reflecting on the Suttas

The tenth way of arousing rapture is reflecting on the *suttas*. Some suttas describe the virtues of the Buddha. if you are a person with a lot of faith, reflecting on one of these suttas can give you great joy and happiness. The *Satipatthanna Sutta,* among others, talks about the benefits one can enjoy through practicing the Dhamma. Others contain inspiring stories of the saugha, the community of noble ones. Reading or reflecting on these suttas can fill one with inspiration, which leads to rapture and happiness.

11. Inclining the Mind

Finally, if you firmly and consistently incline the mind toward developing rapture, your aim will be fulfilled. You must understand that rapture arises when the mind is relatively clean of kilesas. So, to reach rapture, you must put in

energy to be mindful from moment to moment so that concentration arises and the kilesas are kept at bay. You must be fully committed to the task of arousing firm mindfulness in each moment whether you are sitting or lying down, walking, standing or doing other activities.

TRANQUILITY: FIFTH FACTOR OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Most people's minds are in a state of agitation all the time. Their minds run here and there, flapping like flags in a strong wind, scattering like a pile of ashes into which a stone is tossed. There is no coolness or calmness, no silence, no peace. This restlessness or dissipation of mind might properly be called the waves of mind, reminiscent of the water's surface when wind is blowing. Ripples or waves of mind become apparent when restlessness occurs.

Even if this scattered mind becomes concentrated, the concentration still is associated with restlessness, as when one sick member of the family affects all the others with feverishness and unrest. So, too, restlessness has a strong effect on other simultaneously occurring mental states. When restlessness is present, it is not possible for true happiness to be reached.

When the mind is scattered, it is difficult to control our behavior. We begin to act according to our whims and fancies without considering properly whether an action is wholesome or not. Because of this unthinking mind, we may find ourselves performing unskillful actions or saying unskillful things. Such speech and action can lead to remorse, self-judgement and even more agitation. "I was wrong. I shouldn't have said that. If only I'd thought about it before I did it." When the mind is assaulted by remorse and regret, it will not be able to gain happiness.

The enlightenment factor of tranquility arises in the absence of restlessness and remorse. The Pali word for it is *passaddhi,* which means cool calmness. Coolness and calmness of mind can only occur when mental agitation or activity have been silenced.

In the world today, people feel a lot of mental suffering. Many resort to drugs, tranquilizers and sleeping pills to bring calm and enjoyment to their minds. Often young people experiment with drugs to get through a period in their lives when they feel great agitation. Unfortunately they sometimes find

drugs so enjoyable that they end up addicted, which is a terrible pity.

The tranquil peace that comes from meditation is far superior to anything drugs or any other external substances can provide. Of course, the goal of meditation is much higher than just peace, but peace and tranquility are nonetheless benefits of walking the straight, correct path of the Dhamma.

Calming the Mind and Body

The characteristic of passaddhi is to calm the mind and body, to silence and tranquilize agitation.

Extracting Heat from the Mind

Its function is to extract or suppress the heat of the mind which arises due to restlessness, dissipation or remorse. When the mind is assaulted by these harmful states, it becomes hot, as if on fire. Tranquility of mind extinguishes that heat and replaces it with the characteristic of coolness and ease.

Nonagitation

The manifestation of passaddhi is nonagitation of body and mind. As a yogi you can easily observe how this state of mind brings about great calm and tranquility, physical and mental.

Surely you are familiar with the absence of tranquility. There is always an urge to move, to get up and do some thing. The body twitches, the mind darts nervously back and forth. When all of this ceases, there are no ripples in the mind, just a smooth and calm state. Movements become gentle, smooth and graceful. You can sit with hardly a flutter of movement.

This factor of enlightenment follows invariably upon the arising of the previous one, rapture. The strongest rapture, pervasive rapture, is most particularly associated with strong tranquility. After pervasive rapture has filled the whole body, one feels unwilling to move at all, not to mention to disturb one's mental stillness.

It is said that the Buddha spent the first forty-nine days after his liberation enjoying the fruits of enlightenment. He maintained certain postures for seven days each, at seven different places, enjoying the fruits of enlightenment by going in and out of fruition attainments. By virtue of his pervasive *Dhamma piti* or Dhamma rapture, his whole body was permeated with satisfaction for all of that time, so that he did not want to move and could not even fully close his eyelids. His eyes remained fully opened or half opened. You, too, may experience how the eyes fly open involuntarily when strong rapture arises. You may try to close them, but they fly open again. Eventually you may decide to

continue your practice with your eyes open. If you have such experiences, perhaps you can appreciate how much greater was the Buddha's happiness and Dhamma rapture.

Wise Attention Brings Tranquility

According to the Buddha the way to arouse tranquility is through wise attention. More specifically, this is wise attention directed toward activating wholesome thoughts, wholesome mental states and, more importantly, meditative mental states, so that tranquility and rapture will arise.

Seven More Ways of Developing Tranquility

For their part, the commentators point out seven ways of arousing tranquility.

1. Proper food

The first way is to take sensible and nutritious food — food that satisfies the twin principles of necessity and suitability. Nutrition is very important, as you know. One's diet need not be elaborate, but it should provide for the body's physical needs. If your food is not nutritious enough, your physical strength will not be sufficient for you to make progress in meditation. Food should also be suitable, which means appropriate for you personally. If certain foods cause digestive upheavals, or if you really dislike them, you will not be able to practice. You will not feel well and you will constantly be pining for foods you would prefer to have.

We might draw a good lesson from the Buddha's time. A particular rich merchant and a laywoman were the leaders and organizers of most of the religious occasions in the area where the Buddha was teaching. Somehow things never seemed to work quite right unless these two were involved in planning and organizing a retreat or other event. Their secret of success was holding to the principles of necessity and suitability. They always took the trouble to find out what was needed by the monks, nuns or yogis who were invited to receive food donations. The man and woman also found out what was suitable. Perhaps you can remember having food you needed and longed for, food which also was suitable, so that after eating it you found your mind became calm and concentrated.

2. Good Climate

The second way to arouse tranquility is to meditate in an environment where the weather is good, so that you find it comfortable and convenient to meditate. Everyone has preferences. No matter what we prefer, however, it is possible to adapt to different climates by the use of fans and heaters, or lighter and heavier

clothing.

3. A Comfortable Posture

A third way to cultivate tranquility is to adopt a comfortable posture. We generally sit and walk in vipassana practice. These are the two best postures for beginners. Comfortable does not mean luxurious! Lying down or sitting in a chair with a backrest might be considered luxurious postures unless you have a physical ailment that makes them necessary. When you sit unsupported, or when you walk, you need a certain degree of physical effort to keep from falling over. In the luxurious postures this effort is missing, and it is easier to doze off. The mind becomes very relaxed and comfortable, and in no time you might disturb the air with snores.

4. Neither Overenthusiasm nor Sloppiness

The fourth way to arouse tranquility is to maintain a balanced effort in practice. You should be neither overenthusiastic nor sloppy. If you push yourself too hard, you will miss the object and become tired. If you are lazy, you will not move very far ahead. Overzealous people may be likened to people who are in a big hurry to reach the top of a mountain. They climb very quickly, but because the mountain is steep, they must stop frequently to rest. In the end it takes them a long time to get to the top of the mountain. Lazy, sloppy types, on the other hand, will be like snails crawling far behind.

5-6. Avoiding Louts, Choosing Calm and Kind Friends

Avoiding bad-tempered, rough or cruel people can also aid tranquility. It is obvious that if your companions are hot-tempered, always angry with you and scolding you, you will never arrive at peace of mind. It is also evident that you will become more tranquil by associating with people who are calm and quiet in body and in mind.

7. Inclining the Mind toward Peacefulness

Last, if you constantly incline your mind toward practice, hoping to achieve tranquility and peace, you can realize this aim. If you are vigilant in activating mindfulness, the enlightenment factor of tranquility will arise in you quite naturally.

CONCENTRATION: SIXTH FACTOR OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Concentration is that factor of mind which lands on the object of observation, which pricks into it, penetrates into it and stays there. The P±li word for it is s±madhi.

Nonagitation

The characteristic of s±madhi is nondispersal, nondissipation, nonscatteredness. This means that the mind sticks with the object of observation, sinks into it, and remains still and calm, right there.

Fixed Concentration and Moving Concentration

There are two types of s±madhi. One is continuous s±madhi, which is the concentration gained while meditating on a single object. This is the type of concentration gained in pure tranquility meditation, where the one requirement is for the mind to stay put on one object to the total exclusion of all other objects. Those who follow the path of continuous concentration are able to experience it especially when they gain absorption into the jh±nas.

Vipassan± practice, however, is aimed toward the development of wisdom and the completion of the various stages of insight. Insight, of course, refers to basic intuitive understandings such as the distinction between mind and matter, the intuitive comprehension of their interrelation ship by virtue of cause and effect, and the direct perception of the impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and selflessness of all physical and mental phenomena. These are basic in sights, and there are others which one must traverse before attaining the path and fruition consciousness which have nibbana or the cessation of all suffering as their object.

In vipassan± practice, the field of awareness of objects is crucially important. The field of vipassan± objects are mental and physical phenomena, those things which are directly perceptible without resorting to the thinking process. In other words, as we practice vipassan± we observe many different objects, with the goal of gaining insight into their nature. Momentary concentration, the second type, is most important in vipassan± practice. Vipassan± objects are arising and passing away all the time, and momentary concentration arises in each moment with each object. In spite of its momentary nature, such s±madhi can arise from moment to moment without breaks in between. If it does so, momentary concentration shares with continuous concentration the power to tranquilize the mind and keep the kilesas at bay.

Gathering the Mind

Let us say you are sitting, watching the rise and fall of the abdomen. As you make the effort to be mindful of the rising and falling processes, you are being with the moment. With each moment of energy and effort you expend in cultivating awareness, there is a

corresponding mental activity of penetration. It is as though the mind were stuck fast onto the object of observation. You drop, or fall, into the object. Not only is the mind one-pointed and penetrating into the object, not only does the mind remain still for that moment in that object, but this mental factor of s±madhi has the power to gather together the other mental factors which arise simultaneously with that moment of consciousness. Concentration is a factor which collects the mind together; this is its function. It keeps all the mental factors in a group so that they do not scatter or disperse. Thus, the mind remains firmly embedded in the object.

Peace and Stillness

There is an analogy here with parents and children. Good parents want their children to grow up to be well-mannered and morally responsible adults. Toward this goal, they exercise some degree of control over their offspring. Kids are not yet mature, and they lack the wisdom of discretion. So parents must make sure they do not run out and mix with the naughty children of the neighborhood. Mental factors are like children in this respect. Just as children who lack parental guidance may act in ways that harm them selves and others, so too the uncontrolled mind will suffer from bad influences. The kilesas are always loitering nearby. If the mind is not contained, it can easily mix with delinquents like desire, aversion, anger, or delusion. Then the mind becomes wild and ill-mannered, which manifests in bodily behavior as well as in speech. The mind, like a child, may resent discipline at first. By and by, however, it will become more and more tame and civilized and tranquil, and more remote from attacks by the kilesas. The concentrated mind becomes more and more still, more and more quiet, more and more peaceful. This sense of peace and stillness is the manifestation of concentration.

Children, too, can be tamed if they are properly cared for. They may have a wild nature at first, but eventually, as they mature, they will understand why they should avoid bad people. They will even begin to be grateful for the care and control their parents gave to them. Perhaps they even observe that some childhood friend whose parents lacked vigilance has grown up to be a criminal. When they are old enough to go out into the world, they will be able to discriminate for themselves what sort of people to choose as friends, and whom to stay away from. As they grow older and more mature, this upbringing of theirs causes their continued development and prosperity.

Concentration Permits Wisdom to Arise

Concentration is the proximate cause for the unfolding of wisdom. This fact is very important. Once the mind is quiet and still, there is space for wisdom to arise. There can be comprehension of the true nature of mind and matter. Perhaps there will be an intuitive insight into how mind and matter can be differentiated, and how they are related by cause and effect. Step by step, wisdom will penetrate into more and more profound levels of truth. One will see clearly the characteristics of impermanence, suffering and absence of self; and finally insight is gained into the cessation of suffering. When this illumination happens, a person will never be able to become a grossly evil person again, no matter what environment he or she may be in.

Parents and Children

Parents or potential parents should perhaps prick up their ears here. It is very important for parents to control their own minds by concentration. Eventually they should complete the various levels of insight. Such parents can be very skillful in bringing up children, because they can differentiate clearly between wholesome and unwholesome activities. They will be able to instruct their children likewise, most particularly by setting a good example. Parents who do not control their minds, who are given to ill-mannered behavior, cannot help their children develop goodness and intelligence.

Some of my students in Burma have been parents. When they started meditation, they only considered their children's worldly welfare with respect to education and earning a livelihood in this world. Then these parents came to our meditation center and practiced. They had deep practice. When they returned to their children, they had new attitudes and plans. They now felt that it was more important for their children to learn to control their minds and develop good hearts than just to gain success in the world. When the children came of age, their parents urged them to practice meditation. In fact, when I asked the parents if there was a difference between children born before and after meditation experiences, the parents replied, "Oh, certainly. Those who were born after we completed our meditation practice are more obedient and considerate. They have good hearts compared with the other children."

Steady Attention Causes Concentration

The Buddha said that continuous wise attention, aimed toward the development of concentration was the cause of concentration. Preceding concentration causes successive concentration to arise.

Eleven More Ways to Arouse Concentration

The commentaries describe eleven more ways to arouse concentration.

1. Cleanliness

The first is purity of the internal and external bases, of the body and the environment. This influence has been discussed under the second factor of enlightenment, investigation (see page 103).

2. A Balanced Mind

The second cause of concentration is balancing the controlling faculties, wisdom and faith on the one hand, energy and concentration on the other. I have devoted a chapter to this balancing (see page 29).

3. Clear Mental Image

The third cause is more relevant to jh±na practice than to strict vipassan±, and so I will mention it only briefly. It is to be skillful in the concentration object, meaning to maintain a clear mental image as is practiced in tranquility meditation.

4. Uplifting the Discouraged Mind

The fourth cause is to uplift the mind when it becomes heavy, depressed or discouraged. You have doubtless taken a lot of bumps and tumbles in your practice. At these times you should try to uplift your mind, perhaps applying techniques for arousing energy, rapture or insight. Uplifting the discouraged mind is also one of the teacher's jobs. When a yogi comes to interviews with a long and sullen face, the teacher knows how to inspire him or her.

5. Calming the Overenthusiastic Mind

At times it is also necessary to put down the excited mind. This is the fifth cause leading to the development of concentration. At times yogis have fascinating experiences in their meditation practice. They become excited and active; their energy overflows. At these times the teacher should not be encouraging. He or she should speak in such a way as to put yogis in their proper place, one might say. A teacher might also help to activate the fifth factor of enlightenment, tranquility, by the means discussed in the previous section. Or the teacher may instruct yogis to take it easy, just settle back and watch without trying too hard.

6. Cheering the Mind that is Withered by Pain

If the mind is shrunken and withered by pain, it may need to be made happy. This is the sixth means. A yogi may feel depressed by the environment, or by a recurrence of an old health problem. At this time the mind needs to be uplifted and cleared so that it becomes bright and sharp again. You might try to liven it up in various ways. Or the teacher also can cheer you up, not by telling jokes, but by encouraging talk.

7. Continuous Balanced Awareness

The seventh way to arouse s±madhi is to continue balanced awareness at all times. Sometimes as the practice really deepens, you seem to be making no effort, but you are still mindful of objects as they arise and pass. At such times you should try not to interfere, even if this comfortable speed feels too slow for you and you want to step on the gas. You may want to realize the Dhamma very quickly. If you do try to speed up, you will upset the mind's equilibrium, and your awareness will become blunt. On the other hand, everything is so nice and smooth that you might relax too much. This, too, brings regression in practice. When there is effortless effort, you should cruise along, yet nonetheless keep up with the momentum that is present.

8-9. Avoiding the Distracted, Choosing Friends who are Focused You should avoid people who are unconcentrated, and keep company with people who are concentrated -

the eighth and ninth arousers of concentration. People who are neither calm nor peaceful, who have never developed any kind of concentration, carry a lot of agitation within them. Children born to such parents may also lack peace of mind. In Burma there is a concept closely related to the current Western notion of "good vibes." There are many cases of people who have never meditated before, but when they come into the meditation center as visitors, they begin to feel very tranquilized and peaceful. They get the vibrations of yogis who are working seriously. Some visitors decide to come and practice. This seems very natural.

In the Buddha's time there was a king named Aj±tasattu who had killed his father to gain the throne. He spent many, many sleepless nights after committing this evil deed. Finally he decided to consult the Buddha. He went through the forest and came upon a group of monks listening with peaceful concentration to a discourse of the Buddha. It is said that all his remorse and agitation disappeared, and he was filled with calm and tranquility such as he had not felt in a long time.

10. Reflecting on the Peace of Absorption

The tenth method is to reflect on the peace and tranquilty of the jh±nic absorptions. This is relevant for yogis who have meditated in this way and attained pure tranquility. Remembering the method they used to attain jh±na, they can briefly use it in the present moment to attain concentration of mind. Those who have not yet attained the jh±nas perhaps can recall some of the times when momentary concentration was very strong, when there was a feeling of peace and one-pointedness. By remembering the feeling of liberation from hindrances and the peace of mind that comes from continually activating momentary concentration, concentration could again arise.

11. Inclining the Mind

The eleventh and last cause for concentration is to incline the mind persistently toward developing concentration. Everything depends on the effort expended in each moment. If you try to be concentrated, you will succeed.